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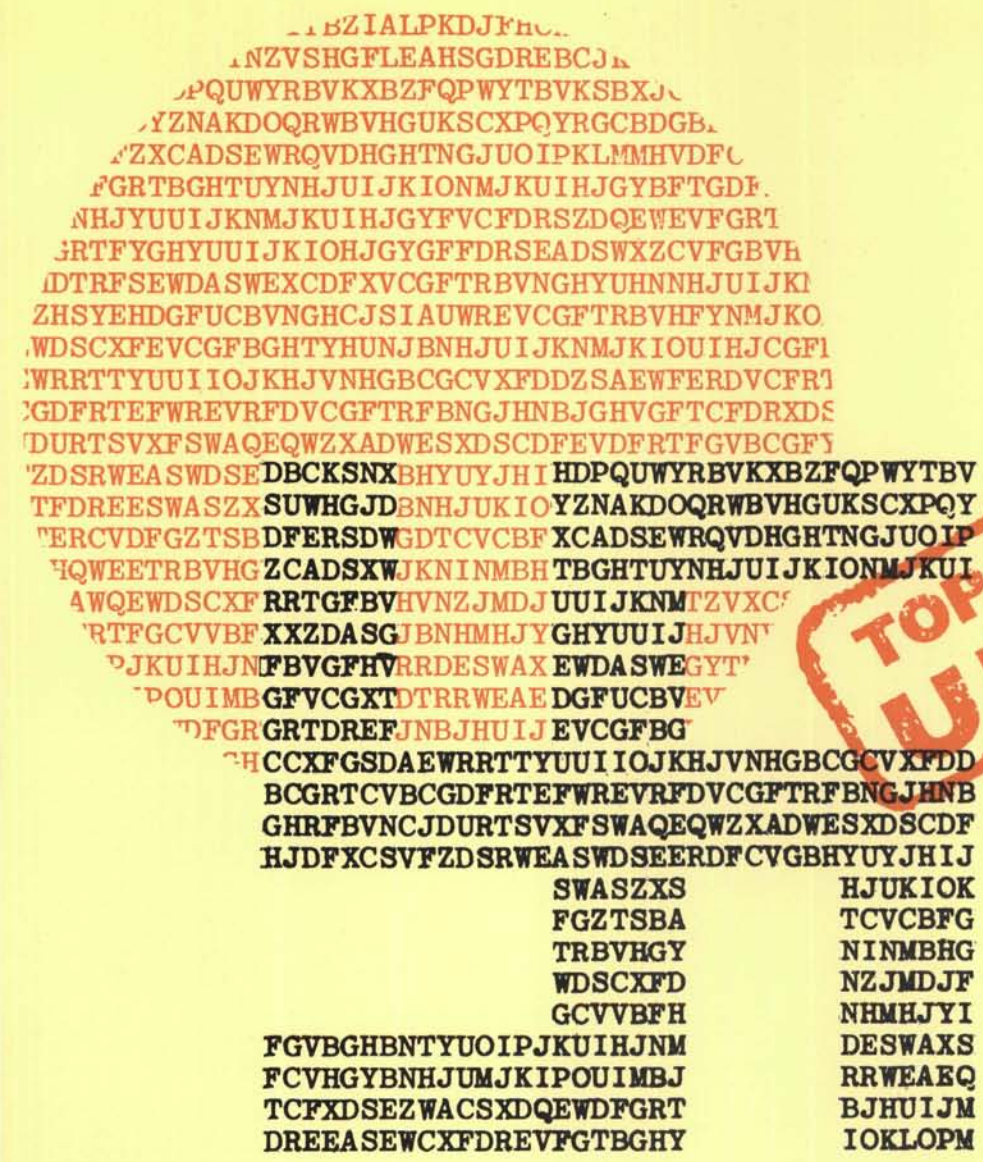


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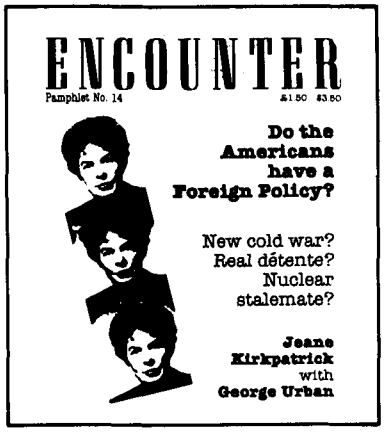


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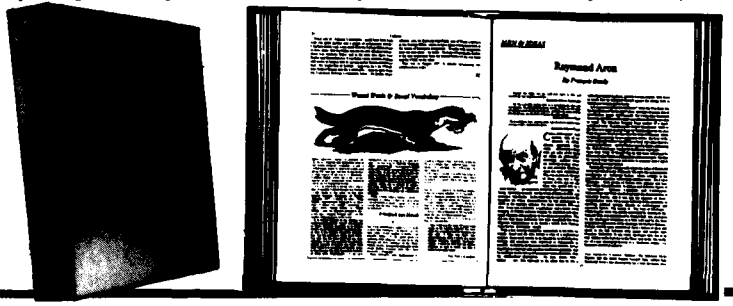

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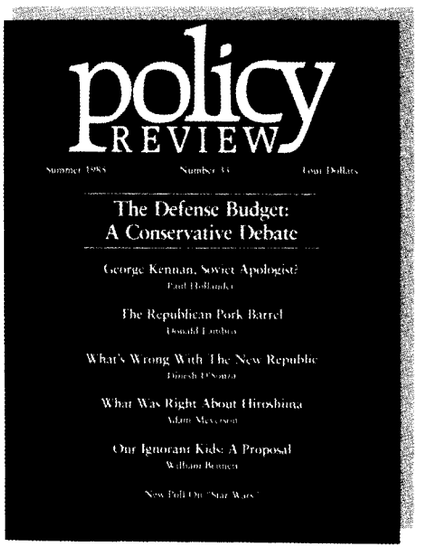


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# *M. M. Carlin*

# *Waiting for His Excellency*

I AM STANDING with my back against a pillar, waiting for His Excellency. I am reading a page of *Time* magazine. Everyone is waiting for His Excellency.

Two or three hundred are gathered together, in the central hall of our Institution, all waiting for His Excellency. There is a murmuring roar of conversation, somehow loud yet somehow still. A few of us are standing near the back, a few, like myself, along the side, to get the light through the open side-doors, waiting, in the hall, for His Excellency.

I turn a page of *Time* magazine, and fold it back upon itself. According to my watch of stainless steel, His Excellency is rather late. He promised to address our Institution at fourteen hundred hours "sharp." It is now fifteen hundred hours and His Excellency has not yet appeared.

Outside, the sun of Central Africa, cooled a little from the true equatorial by the lake-haze and the height of our plateau, beats gently down upon the beds and lawns of our Institution. A gardener is cutting grass out there, with a stroke lazy but intent. The grass in these parts is cut by hand, with a sharpened piece of iron—there isn't a lawn-mower in this country. It's what they call a labour-intensive economy. One of the purposes of our Institution is to render the economy less labour-intensive, and more capital-intensive, but that hasn't helped us with His Excellency. Our Institution has been found to be a foreign Institution, and so therefore one hostile to the country, the people, and His Excellency. That Excellency has desired to meet us—the teachers, pupils, accountants, clerks—in order to discuss with us precisely the nature and future of our Institution. Thus we are gathered here, sitting and standing, waiting for that same Excellency.

Now the big fans overhead are put to use—swishing, slowly, desynchronised. The curtains of the stage have been drawn apart, a table set, chairs, water. Still His Excellency has not appeared.

Indeed, His Excellency is a tardy Excellency. But certain members of his staff are here. They are always up to time—and more than up to time. They are everywhere to be seen.

Some of them, in fact, are actually on the roof. I saw them when I came along from the teachers' common-room. Some few more are up in the gallery, and two of them appear, from time to time, dead ahead on that silent stage. Others are pacing about the hall, strolling-patrolling in the attitude of Security. Do you know the attitude of Security? Arms folded, fingers spread—fingers of the right hand, not so much. That is the attitude of Security.

And still His Excellency has not appeared. The hands of my watch of stainless steel have now passed fifteen fifteen hours. The noise of conversation has swelled just a little. The fans are turning leisurely overhead.

Those members of His Excellency's staff who are strolling-patrolling all about us are not the bearers of steel watches, nor are they clad in open-neck shirts like most of the members of our Institution. They show instead an elegant shoe, a costly tie, a jacket of sheen and a timepiece aureate. They are all suited-out and gold-watched-up. They *look* well. They look very well indeed.

It is true that the hang of the suit of sheen is not quite perfect on one side; for each of these beauties—Nubians all—carries an instrument of destruction. Yea, underneath the suit of sheen is hidden, (hugged), handy, sudden, an instrument, loaded, of destruction. Hence the attitude of Security: in our central hall, strolling-patrolling, waiting for His Excellency.

OUTSIDE THE OPEN DOORS of the hall—where they are strolling-patrolling too—I see the gardener still cutting grass with stroke lazy but intent. He too knows the attitude of Security. I see him wiping his honest brow, holding his bent and sharpened piece of iron by its handle bound with honest string. This gardener is waiting for His Excellency to go away; to depart from our Institution, taking along his members of staff, their suits and ties and watches, and their instruments of destruction. I looked up and saw the gardener there, a-wiping of his honest brow—as gardeners do, as gardeners will—while turning another page of my *Time* magazine. No doubt the gardener out in that garden has observed the murderers on the roof. *They* are waiting for His Excellency to arrive—along with more members of his staff like themselves. So the gardener gives his attention to the grass: not working too slowly, not working too quick.

The time is now fifteen thirty-five hours, and we are still waiting for His Excellency.



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His Excellency was not so long ago a company sergeant-major in his country's army, with a reputation in boxing and rugby football; until he suddenly and with great skill in violence promoted himself General, and President, and Excellency. A number of medals have been invented, and awarded exclusively to himself. When he comes to address us in our central hall on the nature and future of our Institution, will he too wear a suit of sheen? Or will he be clad in all-out uniform, wearing the ribbons of his honours various? We shall see. No one knows this mind. His Excellency is a good joke abroad. Comical books are written about him, and many cartoons are drawn.

Comical stories are made up about him, e.g., by the British Broadcasting Corporation: "Your Excellency, what are you doing about Defence?—*De man wid de nails is coming to mend de fence!*"

Isn't that a funny story about His Excellency? But the two men I saw last Sunday morning did not look to be smiling much. I saw them in different parts of the town—one was lying in a lake of blood—it seemed to be soaking the whole road. The other did not seem to bleed at all—I thought he was sleeping off a binge, a drunk. But his slit-open eyes were not the eyes of a drunk. Funny thing, blood. Life's a funny thing. *De man wid de nails is coming to mend de fence!*

And still we are waiting for His Excellency. A silent student, behind and beside me, is just moving forward a step or two. I look round at him, and he looks round at me. This student is wearing a gold watch.

I am staring into the eyes of one of His Excellency the President's bodyguard-executioners.

What's more, the damnedest thing has happened. We glanced at each other, at exactly the instant, and our glances now have locked. It is one of those things—I ought to have looked away at once. Normally, one looks elsewhere—upwards, elsewhere, downwards, anywhere. But something went wrong, and our stare locked.

It locked. I cannot look away. I have to look this—well, this person—I have to look him in the eyes, you see. I have to keep looking him in the eyes. Now, how did I get into this?

The young man is small, slender, very black—a Nubian naturally, like his master. He stands beside me in the attitude, with arms folded and fingers spread. He has flared trousers, and flared fingers too. But I do not notice these things till later. Now, we are shut into our stare. It is a stare-out. It is a stare-down. It is what they call a confrontation.

This is all pure accident, you understand. The young man, on duty, just happened to arrive there—at me, and my pillar, and my *Time* magazine. He does not object to my *Time* magazine—though *Time* magazine has been giving His Excellency some very bad publicity lately. Or perhaps it is useful publicity, considering. In any case, they are not concerned—in one of His Excellency's own phrases, they are "not at all worried" by *Time* magazine. It was simply that, through one of those unlucky chances, I looked round, and our eyes met.

(The world is divided into countries where you need to read *Time* magazine and countries where you do not. This country is one of the former.)

So here we are . . . .

And so, what now?

It is as if we are in a tunnel, from which neither can escape. His young face, of a fledged criminal, half-bold, half-sullen, is only a few inches from my own. His eyes are half-hard, growing harder, but behind them lie the shades of guilt. He is really rather evil, and he is looking at me.

Very well then, you swart and slender wearer of Italian shoes—I will look right back at you! The stimulus of that violent place has worked, and brought me up to protest point. All the frustration, threat and insult that we have endured over many months gathers into clerkly aggression. Who is this armed hooligan? Who are these people, patrolling and strolling? His Excellency the President, for sure! The nature and future of our Institution!

After all, I have a lot on my side: education, experience, age—age is accorded respect in Africa; and what's more, I have colour and culture. I am of the dominant culture-colour, and my antagonist is not. I am the right colour, and he is the wrong colour, and that is how the world still works. It may be deplorable, but it helps right now. Moreover, I stem from a certain realm, where democratic achievement has some credit. I've got all that. I can use it. I can stare this fellow down.

With the eyes of knowledge, with the brows of authority, I resist the pressure of the antagonist. *My* eyes are the seeing eyes. My eyes, as they stare into his, carry the power of a dominant ethos.

So then, we stare.

(Myself, I'm still feeling uncomfortable. Evidently it doesn't show.)

There is a shift in his stare. The hardness and the hotness is going, his gaze seems to retreat before me, the boldness of evil is going away. The guilt lurks longer. He turns on his heel.

He strolls, patrols, down the side of the hall, his arms folded and his fingers spread.

The subdued roar of conversation, rising now to a bolder babble, washes back into my ears, after what seemed an hour of silence. No one has noticed the incident. Only the Nubian and I met in contest—and I defeated him. We won.

He has turned on his heel. He has turned away his head. He has turned his eyes away from mine. He has turned his back on me and strolled away. With careless pomp he has strolled himself off, arms folded and fingers spread in the attitude of Security.

We won. We won! Victoria Victrix! Chelsea Rules, and Splice the Mainbrace. . . .

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AND SUDDENLY sirens from afar announce the approach of His Excellency. The tone of conversation in the hall changes, the stroller-patrollers become more intent. The sirens grow in volume, the roar of motorcycles reverberates, His Excellency is at the door of our hall. He is being received by the appropriate people. Still there is delay. We are denied him yet. Everyone is looking round, craning their necks.

His Excellency comes swiftly into the hall, closely surrounded by his people. They walk close together and swiftly, their air is an air intent on business. We gain the impression that we are but one of the many engagements of His Excellency. All together, they mount the stage, and there are words of welcome, deeply polite. The audience is silent, polite.

The young man is at my elbow again. Inky, the Nubian has returned.

With a sunk heart, I glance at him, once. My eyes of knowledge, and my brows of authority, have not reckoned on a second encounter. I see the print of *Time* magazine with rather extraordinary clarity now.

I try to look up, to meet his eyes. I can't. One glance was enough. Age, authority, experience, education, colour, culture and democracy all melt away before that stare, which is the stare now of bale. Bale—you can feel it. The weight of malevolence rests on my eyelids. It is heavy. It keeps them down.

Hard upon the mainbrace, we strike our colours. I look down at my magazine—and still he stands there. I stare down hard upon a page of *Time*. Then he moves slowly, easily, away.

*He* has won. Indeed, the murderers have won again. This tiny battle has been lost—conceded—and I'm probably lucky to have come out of it alive. That was a damfool thing to do, and of course, perfectly useless.

I dare not look up as he goes. I am ashamed.

His Excellency the President has now been introduced. His Excellency rises from his seat. His agate eyes survey us all, and in the silence so profound, we almost seem to hear him breathing. This son of a peasant from the arid north has now shot dead—or caused to be shot dead (although his work is often personal)—or caused to be done to death somehow—by slash, by sledge-hammer, many means—something between a hundred thousand and a quarter of a million human beings.

His Excellency the President bends to the lectern. His Excellency the President looks over his audience with the eyes of puzzled evil. In broken English, His Excellency the President begins his well-written diatribe on the nature and future of our Institution.

## Surprised

A week ago, what should I see but two young swans
Who'd found each other; asleep in a ditch; full-grown
Cygnets, brown on a green marsh mattress
Of duckweed; dismantled wind-up gramophones . . .

Their beaks tucked back under a wing
Like fold-up needle-heads—inward-bound,
As self-contained as two pies, till she felt me
Looking and unsheathed her head, peeking around.

Then he woke too—quizzing more carefully,
Solicitously, more protectively than she,
But, seeing no danger, turned a serpent's gaze
And studied her with deathless *agape*.

They considered sleeping again but felt a need
Had come to paddle on; so, with slow care,
Each tested the stretch of a brown wing
As if to know the gear was in repair—

And made two partings down the duckweed,
Not parted in their partings. I had to know
Swans love with inseparable love, and so our birdselves go
Treading the water, not knowing on whom we feed.

*Herbert Lomas*

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*James Rusbridger*

# Winds of Warning

## *Mythology & Fact about ENIGMA and Pearl Harbor*

THE ONE STORY of World War II that, above all others, continues to intrigue and mystify is that about which so much has been written, yet so much remains obscure and misunderstood: namely, the interception and subsequent decryption of enemy radio signals. It is now over ten years since the first account of the British wartime code-breaking organisation—the Government Code and Cipher School, located at Bletchley Park, near London—was published.[1] Since then there have been numerous other books, articles, and television documentaries, each attempting to explain this highly complex story. Across the Atlantic, it has been public knowledge for many more years that the US government was able to read the most secret Japanese diplomatic ciphers in 1941.[2] But far less is known (and much misunderstanding still persists) about the Americans' ability to read the operational ciphers of the Japanese armed forces before the outbreak of hostilities at Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

The confusion surrounding the achievements of both British and American code-breakers has been, and continues to be, compounded by the fact that the work of signals intelligence (so-called *Sigint*) and cryptanalysis, in war or peace, is a highly sensitive subject that no government is willing to discuss openly. Nor will it allow anything like full access to archival material, with the result that publicly available records are fragmented and seldom provide the complete facts.

For example, accounts about the work of Bletchley Park often refer to "German *Enigma* intercepts" in the Public Record Office at Kew, but this is incorrect. Apart from one small batch of messages, there is no German *Enigma* available at the PRO. What has been released is the composite ULTRA signals sent from Bletchley Park to field commanders; this is quite a different matter as these do not provide the facts in their original form. Also missing from the Kew PRO are the ULTRA intelligence appreciations, the card indexes, diplomatic *Enigma* intercepts, and all Japanese intercepts. Some of this material is being withheld on the spurious excuse of "national security", but it seems likely that a great deal of original material was destroyed in 1953.[3] Books and articles frequently confuse the true meaning of terms such as ULTRA, MAGIC, and PURPLE, each of which has a precise place in cryptographic history.

BECAUSE THE FIRST REVELATIONS about British ULTRA did not publicly appear until 30 years after the War, many of those who had been directly involved were dead, while those still alive who worked at Bletchley Park (apart from a few exceptions[4]) have been prevented from writing about their work. They have even been refused access to their own reports which are today kept by GCCS's successor, the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham. Sufferers from this obstructive attitude include Professor G. C. McVittie, OBE (who was responsible for breaking the *Enigma* weather ciphers), and Sir Stuart Milner-Barry (who worked in Hut 6 on German military and Air Force *Enigma*), while the report of Bletchley Park's work on Japanese ciphers, compiled by Dr Michael Loewe in 1945, is similarly unavailable for public inspection.

The three volumes of the official history[5] are frustratingly incomplete, omitting any reference to Anglo/American and Anglo/Dutch cooperation, and do not deal at all with cryptanalysis operations in the Far East.

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND the role of Allied code-breaking in World War II, it is necessary to appreciate how the art of cryptanalysis and *Sigint* changed significantly with the advent of radio communications at the turn of the century and the development of machine enciphering in the early 1920s.[6] Radio suddenly made it

---

[1] F. W. Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret* (1974).

[2] Although there is a fundamental difference between a code and a cipher, this is unimportant in the context of this article.

[3] Private correspondence with Mrs Jean Howard, June 1985. Information from the Prime Minister to Mrs Jean Howard.

[4] See Gordon Peter Welchman, *The Hut 6 Story* (1982), and Peter Calvocoressi, *Top Secret Ultra* (1980).

[5] Letter to author from Professor G. C. McVittie, 22 July 1983. Letter from GCHQ Library, 27 September 1984. F. H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, vols. I-III (HMSO London, 1979-1984).

[6] The most comprehensive and lucid account of the history of codes and ciphers remains D. Kahn, *The Codebreakers* (1966). A more technical account is C. A. Deavours & L. Kruh, *Machine Cryptography and Modern Cryptanalysis* (Artech House, 1985).



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possible for a military commander to maintain instantaneous contact with any number of field units irrespective of distance and terrain, but this ease of communication was itself an open invitation for the enemy eavesdropper, and thus the art of *Sigint* was born.

There can be few of us who, when young, did not enjoy the fun of inventing a code in which to send secret messages to a friend; indeed, cryptology remains a fascinating hobby irrespective of any wartime associations. To produce a method of secret writing that defies penetration is not difficult provided only a small number of messages is involved and the system confined to a few people only. But in time of war, with thousands of messages to be sent and received each day, often under distracting battle conditions, there is neither the time nor opportunity to indulge in secret-writing games. If the message does not get through promptly and accurately, it might as well be sent *en clair* for all the good it will achieve.

As the pace of battle quickened, so the demand for faster enciphering systems increased. By the early 1920s three ingenious inventors had each produced an enciphering machine: Edward Hebern in the United States; Arthur Scherbius in Germany; and Boris Hagelin in Sweden. All three designs used a system of interchangeable rotors, but the machines produced by Hebern and Scherbius worked on an electro-mechanical principle with the output displayed by 26 glow-lamps, whereas Hagelin's machine printed out the cipher or plain text on a strip of gummed paper.

Of the three machines, that produced by Arthur Scherbius—the *Enigma*—is the best remembered and has found a place in the history books. Although by the end of 1943 more than 60,000 had been built, this was easily eclipsed by the range of machines produced by Boris Hagelin for the US armed services: the Americans alone bought more than 140,000 of his M-209 cipher machines, making him a millionaire along the way; it also enabled Hagelin to establish his own factory in Switzerland after the War—*Crypto AG*, which is today one of the leaders in cryptographic technology.

Considering the impact which machine enciphering ultimately made, it is ironic to recall the early financial problems each inventor encountered. Hebern managed to sell only twelve machines before going bankrupt: Scherbius was only saved from a similar fate by the intervention of the German government; and the original inventor of Hagelin's machine, Arvid Damm from Stockholm, enjoyed little commercial success up to the time of his death in 1927. This poor sales record was not due to secrecy on the part of the inventors (they widely publicised their machines' capabilities), but simply because commercial companies could not see the necessity of the extra cost involved to protect their secrets, a view shared by some governments too.

Details of the *Enigma* were registered with the British Patent Office (No. 267,472), on 11 August 1927; and in 1928 the Admiralty bought two *Enigmas*, having bought one of Hebern's machines some two years earlier. These three were sent to GCCS, which had been formed in 1919 and came under the authority of Britain's secret service (MI6), responsible to the Foreign Office.[7] Other governments also showed interest, including the Japanese who bought two *Enigmas*; the Italians one Hebern; the US Signal Corps two *Enigmas* in 1928; and the US Navy five Heberns in the same year.

But it was the Germans who made the quantum leap forward by officially adopting *Enigma* as their main enciphering system for the Navy in 1926, the Army in 1928 (*Model G*), and the Air Force in 1934. Thereafter, development of the *Enigma* was firmly under the control of the German government who improved its security by the addition of a plugboard (or *Stecker*), and this became the *Model 1* (first introduced on 1 June 1930) which, with its three active rotors, offered 200 quintillion permutations and formed the cornerstone of the German cipher communications system.

The two *Enigmas* bought by the British Admiralty lay idle at GCCS for six years. In 1934, the Royal Air Force borrowed one and sent it to Creed & Company[8] at Croydon (a family firm run by the deeply religious Creed brothers who led the work-force in prayers before each day's work began).

Creed's main business was the manufacture of teleprinters for the Post Office; and by March 1936 they had made two copies of the commercial *Enigma* (which had no *Stecker*), called "The RAF *Enigma* with Type X attachments", which thereafter became known as *Typex* and remained in use with the Foreign Office until the 1980s. By incorporating the three *Enigma* rotors with a standard Creed teleprinter, *Typex* had the great advantage over *Enigma* of being able to print out the cipher or plain text, and operate on-line with other *Typex* machines and the American *M-134* rotor cryptograph. *Typex* production was carried out at Creed's new factory at Treforest, in Wales; by the start of World War II the RAF had 29 Mk I models and 238 Mk II models (which had five rotors), ensuring that the RAF's main communication links were secure.

The British War Office ordered 25 Mk IIs—some of which were captured at Dunkirk by the Germans, who subsequently converted them to interface with their own *Enigmas*. Ironically, the Admiralty showed no interest at all, and it was not until well into the War, when it became obvious that the German Naval *Sigint* agency, *B-Dienst*, was reading all the Royal Navy's ciphers with ease (and disastrous results), that the Admiralty belatedly ordered *Typex*. But distant stations like Hong Kong only received theirs in late 1941—not long

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[7] Hinsley, Vol I, *British Intelligence*, p. 20.

[8] Air 2/2720, Public Record Office, Kew. John Terraine, *The Right of the Line* (1985), pp. 39-42. L. Kruh & C. Deavours, "The Typex Cryptograph", *Cryptologia* (April 1983), pp. 145-163.
In 1929 Creed was bought by the ITT Corporation of America, and in 1981 was absorbed into STC Communications Ltd. I am grateful to Mr D. A. Wall for information concerning the history of Creed & Co.

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before they had to throw them into the sea before surrendering to the Japanese.[9]

WHILE THE British Government was slowly waking up to the advantages of machine enciphering, the French and Polish Intelligence Services, independently of each other to begin with, had been mounting a sustained attack against *Enigma*. Much mythology about their work has been created by poorly-researched books based on faulty memories and nationalistic pride; there was also a television drama-documentary shown in Britain in April 1980 which was strongly criticised by the Independent Broadcasting Authority for slanderous misrepresentation.[10]

The work of French Intelligence was greatly helped by a German traitor, Hans-Thilo Schmidt (code-named *Asche*), who from 1931 to 1934 was working in the German Army cipher branch, and from 1935 onwards with the German Air Force *Forschungsamt* (the Research Office of the German Air Ministry). He gave General Gustave Bertrand, of the French Intelligence Service, the *Enigma* keys for 1932, 1933, and 1934, and a mass of matching cipher and plain texts of earlier signals so that settings could be reconstructed. The French passed on this information to GCCS in London, who evinced no interest. And so (in December 1931) General Bertrand contacted Polish Intelligence and discovered that they had been working on the mathematical penetration of *Enigma* with varying degrees of success.[11] The French gave the Poles *Asche*'s German information, which included operational instructions and constructional drawings of the German military version of *Enigma* which differed in several respects from the commercial version the Poles had been developing.

This joint effort ultimately led to the Poles and the French reading *Enigma* for varying periods depending upon how often the Germans changed the settings.[12] But British cryptanalysts played no part in any of this work. It was not until July 1938, with war clouds gathering over Europe, that Polish Intelligence, realising time was not on their side, offered to share all their achievements with the British. This included handing over one of their copies of the military *Enigma*, and details of their electro-mechanical *Bombe* (a device consisting of six *Enigmas* connected together, enabling key settings to be tested quickly). It was this that allowed GCCS to gain their first insight into the military *Enigma* on which the highly successful wartime work of Bletchley Park was subsequently based. Prior to this, British Intelligence had only managed to read a few batches of messages sent by commercial *Enigma* during the Spanish Civil War.

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, US Army and Navy code-breakers faced the same problem: how to monitor and anticipate the likely course of a rising hostile militarism.

An early success had been achieved during the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 when, between July and December, American cryptanalysts had read all the messages between Tokyo and the Japanese delegation, thus enabling them to know the extent of their bargaining position in advance. Unfortunately, the Japanese later discovered what had happened, and it spurred them into the development of some of the world's most complex cipher systems, some of which enjoyed an extra degree of security because of the unique nature of the Japanese language. To overcome this problem, in 1925, the Underwood Typewriter Company produced four *Underwood Code Machines* for the US Navy, at a cost of $645.00. They had typefaces that printed *kana* characters (in Japanese brush-stroke form) instead of Roman letters; and five further machines were ordered in September 1925. In 1927, a *Sigint* station had been established at Peking to intercept Japanese diplomatic signals.

By the time war in the Far East drew near, Japan had many different ciphers and codes in operation; but, in the context of Anglo/American/Dutch cooperation in the months before December 1941, only three main cipher systems need to be considered in detail in order to clear away the many misconceptions that have arisen over the extent of advance warning that might have existed of the attack on Pearl Harbor and on other American and British bases in the Pacific and Far East.[13]

(*1*) The Japanese machine diplomatic cipher. The first machine was used in 1931 and called *91-shiki O-bun In-ji-ki*, or *Alphabetical Typewriter 91*, the *91* being an abbreviation for the Japanese calendar year 2591 which corresponds to 1931. This machine was copied from the German *Enigma* and used a series of rotors. The US Army's Signals Intelligence Service code-named it RED, and broke the cipher in 1936; the US Navy also called this machine *M-3*. In 1937, the RED machine was replaced by a far more complex system called the *Alphabetical Typewriter 97*. The US Army code-named this PURPLE and broke the cipher on 25 September 1940.

Instead of the *Enigma* rotor system, the *Model 97* (or PURPLE) used Strowger telephone 6 level, 45 point, standard selector switches, making its design unique in the world. The achievement of William Friedman and his team of cryptanalysts in Washington was all the more extraordinary since they never saw the Japanese machine before they copied it. There were only about 25 *Model 97* machines in

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[9] Private information from Mr Cedric Brown, June 1985.

[10] *A Man Called Intrepid*, ITV network (1980). Letter from Lady Plowden DBE, Chairman IBA, to HE The Danish Ambassador, 9 May 1980, and to the author, 17 June 1980.

[11] Hinsley, vol I, p. 487; also Jozef Garlinski, *Intercept* (1979). Gustave Bertrand, *Enigma ou la plus grande Enigme de la guerre, 1939-45* (1973). W. Kozaczuk, *Enigma* (Arms & Armour Press, 1984), and Garlinski, pp. 192-204, both contain a detailed technical account of this work.

[12] Hinsley, vol I, p. 490.

[13] Captain Laurence Safford USN and Rear-Admiral Dundas P. Tucker USN, *Rhapsody in Purple—A new history of Pearl Harbor* (*Cryptologia*, July 1982); and *US Naval Security Group History to World War II*, compiled by Captain J. S. Holtwick Jr. USN (US Naval Record SRH 355, June 1971). I am greatly indebted to Captain Roger Pineau USNR and John Costello, for permission to use research material from their book on the memoirs of Rear-Admiral E. T. Layton USN, *And I Was There* (William Morrow, New York, 1985).

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existence, distributed among the most important Japanese diplomatic missions around the world, but it was never used by the Japanese armed services. The PURPLE intercepts were distributed by the Americans under the codename *Operation MAGIC*.

(2) There were the two main Consular Codes used by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first was a simple transposition cipher called *Gaimusho LA*, and the second, a more complex double-transposition cipher, was called by the Americans, in early 1941, *J17*; this was replaced (on 1 March 1941) by *J18*, and that in turn by *J19* (on 1 August 1941). Throughout this period the Americans were reading these codes without much difficulty, but, because of an acute shortage of Japanese-speaking cryptanalysts, messages were often read late due to staff concentrating on the PURPLE intercepts.

(3) There was the main Japanese Fleet Cipher, known to the Americans as *JN25*. Unlike the previous three, this was an operational code, and the version in use in 1941 had become effective on 1 June 1940. The US Navy had started to break *JN25* about the same time as the US Army broke PURPLE—September 1940. The numerical keys for *JN25* were changed on 1 December 1940, on 1 June 1941, and on 4 December 1941. But on each occasion the US Navy was able to master the new keys with only minor delays, and their penetration of the Japanese Navy's signals continued on after the outbreak of war to the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, and the all-important Battle of Midway in June 1942. Only once was this achievement seriously threatened when, in late 1942 (as I have already recounted in the pages of ENCOUNTER), mail containing secret ULTRA material taken from the captured Australian liner *Nankin* revealed to the Japanese Navy the extent of the US Navy's code-breaking activities.[14]

BUT THE AMERICANS were not alone in reading Japanese codes. Britain's GCCS had a *Sigint* operation in Singapore called the Far East Combined Bureau (FECB), with an outpost at Stonecutters Island, in Hong Kong; and even before December 1941 American cryptanalysts were working with GCCS in Singapore and British analysts were working with the Americans at Pearl Harbor. The Dutch Military Intelligence Service also had an extremely efficient *Sigint* and code-breaking organisation located at Bandoeng, in Java (what is today Indonesia), known as the Black Chamber, or *Kamer 14*, under the energetic control of General ter Poorten, Captain Henning, and Colonel Verkuyl. The Dutch had started to read the Japanese Consular code on 6 November 1932, and began penetrating Japanese Naval ciphers in 1933-34. Until very recently, little information has been available about the valuable work of Dutch Intelligence in the Far East.[15]

AFTER THE German invasion of Holland in May 1940, Commander Nave, a brilliant Australian cryptanalyst serving with the Royal Navy at the FECB, who had broken into the Japanese naval cipher *JN25*, arranged that there should be close cooperation between the Dutch and British, with the result that Dutch liaison officers were stationed at FECB and with the US Navy in the Philippines; regular conferences were held in Singapore to exchange information between the three code-breaking teams.[16] This continued until late 1941 when FECB was withdrawn to Colombo, Colonel Verkuyl went to the US Signals Intelligence Service headquarters at Arlington Hall (near Washington), and the Americans were eventually evacuated to Australia. One problem of trying to assess the relative achievements of the American, British, and Dutch code-breaking agencies is that they each used different descriptions for the same codes. Names like PURPLE, *J18*, *J19*, and *JN25* were unknown outside the American *Sigint* organisation; and a further difficulty arises because all the Dutch records were destroyed before the arrival of the Japanese in 1942.

However, Anglo/Dutch cooperation played a very important part in Far East *Sigint* activities but, as with Anglo/American cooperation in this field, has received scant acknowledgement from the British. American generosity to GCCS—like that earlier from Polish Intelligence—made a vital contribution to the success of Bletchley Park's ability to read Japanese diplomatic ciphers (PURPLE); and it is, in my view, very churlish that this valuable help has not been officially recognised.

FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE of the British and French armies in France, on 8 July 1940 the British government asked President Roosevelt if he would agree to an exchange of

> "certain secret information of a technical nature, which our technical experts are anxious to have, urgently."[17]

Despite being a neutral, Roosevelt responded at once, authorising full disclosure of American expertise in the field of radar, sonar, explosives, and—despite a legal prohibition—matters relating to cryptography. Although America and Britain had gone about their pre-War code-breaking activities independently and secretly, there was inevitably a certain amount of unofficial exchange of information. By September 1940 Churchill was aware that the Americans were reading Japanese diplomatic messages (PURPLE), which GCCS was then unable to do. At the same

[14] James Rusbridger, "The Sinking of the 'Automedon', the Capture of the 'Nankin'", ENCOUNTER (May 1985).

[15] R. Haslach, *Nishi no Kaze, Hare* (Uniboek BV, Weesp, Holland, 1985), available only in Dutch at present, I am most grateful to Dr L. G. M. Jaquet for making available English translations from his books on the work of Dutch Intelligence in the Far East.

[16] Letter from General ter Poorten to Major H. A. Long, US Army, 23 July 1960 (Royal Netherlands Army Archives, s'Gravenhage, Holland); and information obtained from the personal diary of Mr C. H. Baker, kindly made available to me.

[17] Safford, p. 211; also *The History of the US Signal Corps in World War II*, Vol I, pp. 192-193; and Ronald William Clark, *The Man Who Broke "Purple"* (1977), pp. 153-154.

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time, the Americans knew GCCS were beginning to read some German *Enigma* messages.

In December 1940 a written agreement was signed between the US Army and Navy and the British Chiefs of Staff: there would be a full exchange of cryptographic techniques, direction-finding, and radio interception, pertaining to the diplomatic, naval, military, and air services of Germany, Italy, and Japan.[18] Despite strong opposition from some senior American military personnel, President Roosevelt insisted that the deal should go ahead although the tide of isolationism was running strong in Congress, and the US ambassador in London (Joseph Kennedy) was openly predicting Britain's defeat.

In January 1941,[19] a team of two US Naval officers (Lt Robert H. Weeks and Ensign Prescott H. Currier) and two US Army officers (Major Abraham Sinkov and Captain Leo Rosen) arrived in England with:

2 PURPLE machines and current keys.
2 RED machines and current keys.
2 sets of Consular Codes—*J17*.
2 sets of *JN25*, with current keys.
2 sets of Japanese Merchant Navy codes.
2 sets of Japanese Naval Attaché cipher.
2 sets of Japanese Naval radio call signs.

It was indeed a cryptographic treasure trove; but unfortunately, history has soured the American goodwill by incorrect reports suggesting that the British Foreign Office failed to honour their side of the arrangement by refusing to give the Americans an *Enigma*. In fact, Lt Weeks visited GCCS at Bletchley Park and was provided with an analogue diagram of the *Enigma* rotor and wiring arrangements, and he took them back to Washington in April 1941.

At the time the American cryptanalysts were using Hollerith tabulators to run through possible key settings, similar to the work performed by the Polish *Bombes* at Bletchley Park, and using this additional information were able to read their first German Naval *Enigma* message in late April 1941. In September 1941 a third PURPLE machine was sent to the British, and in March 1942 the British sent the Americans one of their captured *Enigmas*.

Each PURPLE machine was built and wired by hand which was a laborious and time-consuming process, and by October 1941 only eight PURPLE machines existed. The US Army and the US Navy each had two in Washington; there was one with the US Navy in Corregidor (in the Philippines); and three had gone to GCCS in Britain. Ironically, the third PURPLE machine given to GCCS had actually been intended for Pearl Harbor, with the result that neither the US Army nor US Navy had a PURPLE machine in Hawaii. The two copies of *JN25* sent to GCCS had also been intended for the US Navy in Pearl Harbor, and it had been strongly recommended that only one copy be sent to London so that the other could go to Pearl (as it was, Pearl only got its copy of *JN25* on 15 December 1941).

Of the three PURPLE machines received by the British, one was sent out to Singapore together with one RED machine, and the two copies of *JN25*. From early 1941, therefore, the British were able to read Japanese diplomatic (PURPLE), consular (RED, *J18*, and *J19*) and naval (*JN25*), signals, which information they shared with the US Navy in Corregidor, and the Dutch in Bandoeng. The Dutch were also intercepting the PURPLE messages passing between Tokyo and the Japanese Consul in Batavia but, because *Kamer 14* did not possess a PURPLE machine, these were sent to London for decryption by GCCS.[20] The remaining two PURPLE machines with GCCS at Bletchley Park were used to read Japanese diplomatic messages—particularly those flowing between the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, Baron Oshima, and the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, since the large Japanese missions in Germany and other European countries were notified about all German operations, policies, economics, industry, and even new weaponry.

All this proved an extremely valuable additional insight into Nazi plans throughout the War. It is impossible to know exactly what this harvest of information produced because none of these diplomatic intercepts have been released into the Public Record Office, nor is there any mention in the official history of the general debt we owe to the Americans.

WITH SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE of the enemy's intentions, it is hardly surprising that many have asked why we did not defeat them sooner and why the attack on Pearl Harbor came as such a surprise.

It is, of course, very easy and tempting to reconstruct events with the benefit of hindsight and history that makes them flow with apparent ease and continuity, whereas, at the time they were actually taking place, no one person was in a position to see the entire picture and events simply crowded in on one another and had to be dealt with as best the resources provided, often on an *ad hoc* basis. This is particularly the case with code-breaking, which is seldom a precise strategic weapon but rather a fragmented adjunct to tactical decisions—if the messages are read in time, if the necessary resources are available in the right place, and can be used without compromising the source. As far as the Germans were concerned, in the early days of the War the bulk of their signals went by postal telegraph circuit, which precluded interception. The most important messages went by radio to their *U*-boats, but this was also the most secure *Enigma* system which initially yielded the fewest, and often long delayed, decrypts. Added to which the German Navy was reading with ease British Royal Naval and Merchant Navy codes,[21] with far more devastating results during the Norwegian campaign and, later, in the Atlantic. It was not until after the fall of France in the summer of 1940 that the Germans were forced to use more radio links, thus providing the British with greater opportunities of interception and

[18] No copy of this agreement is available at the PRO, Kew, but Safford, p. 215, and Ladislas Farago, *The Broken Seal* (1967), provide details.

[19] H. E. Barnes, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (1953).

[20] J. C. Bijkerk, *Vaarwel, tot Betere Tijden* (*Farewell, until Better Times*), (Wever BV, Holland, 1974), translation kindly made available by Mr C. H. Baker.

[21] Donald McLachlan, *Room 39* (1968), Ch. 4.

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decryption, particularly with the less secure German Army and Air Force keys.

AS FAR AS THE FAR EAST is concerned, there have been seven official investigations, and a multitude of books, articles, and personal recollections, all attempting to detail what was known—to whom, and when—in the months immediately before Pearl Harbor. This mass of evidence now includes over 130,000 pages of MAGIC decrypts released by the National Security Agency into the National Archives, Washington D.C., in 1980. Still, new evidence continues to float to the surface, often placing a question mark against previous accounts hitherto considered to be authentic in every detail.

IN ORDER TO CLEAR UP some misunderstandings, perhaps it is easier to itemise the information that did *not* exist.

At no time did the diplomatic or PURPLE intercepts give any details of a Japanese attack upon the United States; so it can be argued that even if the PURPLE machine that went to London had (as was originally intended) been sent to Hawaii, this alone would not have provided any direct war warning. Certainly, Pearl Harbor would have been able to read the final section of the long 14-part message from Tokyo, instructing their embassy in Washington to present their final ultimatum to the State Department exactly at 1.00pm Washington time, or 7.30am in Hawaii. But it seems doubtful if that alone would have placed Pearl on any greater degree of alert. After all, General MacArthur in the Philippines had several hours warning of the attack on Pearl, yet was still caught with all his aircraft on the ground and his defences unprepared.

The Consular Code, *J19*, also provided no details of an attack although it did give a number of tantalising pieces of evidence that Japan was preparing for war. The best known examples were the two signals—2353 and 2354—transmitted by Tokyo to Washington (on 19 November 1941) which gave details of action to be taken if diplomatic relations were in danger of being severed. The instructions were concealed in a form of weather forecast, those for Japan and the United States being *Higashi no kazeame* (East Wind, Rain); thus the messages became known as the "*Winds*" signals. Although sent on 19 November, the message was not decoded until November 28 because all available staff were concentrating on PURPLE intercepts.

The "*execute*" portion of the instructions was sent out by Tokyo on 4 December, and during the 1945 Congressional Investigation into the Pearl Harbor attack, it was alleged that all copies of this intercept had mysteriously vanished from the files. Even today controversy continues as to whether the receipt of this message was deliberately suppressed. However, what has not been mentioned previously is that two other *Sigint* agencies also intercepted and read the "*Winds*" messages. One of these was the British GCCS station at Stonecutters Island in Hong Kong, which had no difficulty in reading both parts of the message. Decrypts were immediately sent from the Far East Combined Bureau to Washington,[22] getting there before the Americans had decoded their own intercepts. Additionally, the Dutch in Bandoeng (on 4 December) gave a copy of the "*Winds execute*" decrypt to the US Consul-General, who passed it to the War Department in Washington with the comment:

> "I attach little or no importance to it and view it with some suspicion. Such reports have been common since 1936."[23]

Details of these intercepts are mentioned in the 1945 Congressional Investigation.[24] The other warning that *J19* revealed was, on 2 December, that Japanese embassies should destroy their cipher systems. This was also read by the British and Dutch *Sigint* teams.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE Japanese Task Force to sail for Hawaii were sent in the *JN25* code as the carriers waited in Tankan Bay (Hitokappu Wan), during the last days of November. Were these messages read?

All existing accounts are cautiously imprecise about this, either stating that the US Navy was not reading *JN25* at the time, or that penetration was "tantalisingly fragmentary",[25] whereas all the most recent evidence plainly shows that American, British, Dutch, and possibly Australian, *Sigint* teams were simultaneously reading *JN25* throughout the whole of 1941, and sharing the results with each other on a regular daily basis.

However, all the MAGIC decrypts of intercepted *JN25* signals currently available in American archives bear designators indicating they were retrospectively decrypted only after the War. No 1941 decrypts have yet been released and, of course, not a single British *JN25* decrypt is available either, so until these files are opened the exact extent of the US Navy's knowledge of Japanese naval movements remains confused.

On 27 November the Dutch decrypted a *JN25* message to the Japanese Fleet ordering it to sail in a southerly direction.[26] This information was passed to the Dutch Naval Attaché in Washington who, after examining the details of the message, concluded that the Fleet's direction was more easterly than southerly and it *could* be headed for Pearl Harbor. He passed on the decrypt, together with his own evaluation, to the US Navy who seemed to attach little importance to it. The text of this Dutch decrypt is alleged to include the following paragraph:

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[22] I am grateful to Mr Cedric Brown for this information from the late Lt Charles Dixon RNVR (NZ), a cryptanalyst stationed at Stonecutters Island, Hong Kong, in 1941 (he died in Wellington, New Zealand, on 10 June 1985, aged 77).

[23] Professor Louis de Jong, *The Kingdom of the Netherlands in World War II* (Official History, vol IIa); Dr L. G. M. Jaquet, *Aflossing van de Wacht*, p. 126; and Captain J. W. Henning, chief cryptanalyst, *Kamer 14*, Bandoeng, report dated 11 March 1965 (Royal Netherlands Army Archives), translation kindly made available by Lieut-Colonel H. L. Zwitzer.

[24] The text of this telegram appears in *Foreign Relations of the United States (Japan 1931-1941)*, vol IV, p. 713.

[25] John Costello, *The Pacific War* (1981), p. 119. Kahn, p. 563.

[26] Dr L. G. M. Jaquet, letter to author, 22 June 1985.

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> "The squadron will sail and steam up from Hitokappu Wan, without being discovered, to a meeting place designated at December 3. X-Day will be December 8."

Even though Pearl Harbor was not mentioned, plainly the Japanese Fleet was on the move and some action was to take place on 8 December. Allowing for the International Date Line, this would be 7 December in Hawaii.

TO THIS DAY, the message remains one of the most important and intriguing unsolved mysteries of Pearl Harbor. While there is good evidence—based on personal testimony—that a message was intercepted and decrypted, the exact text cannot be verified because no copy exists in any Dutch archive, nor has one been found among the MAGIC decrypts currently available in Washington.[27]

However, an examination of Admiral Yamamoto's Operational Order No. 1—a copy of which was recovered from the sunken Japanese cruiser *Ca Nachi* in 1944—reveals the text of a similar message sent on 25 November to the Carrier Task Force (waiting in Hitokappu Wan since 22 November), which included the following paragraph:

> "The Task Force shall leave Hitokappu Wan on the morning of November 26 and advance to 42°N and 170°E (standing-by position) on the afternoon of 4 December Japan time, and speedily complete refuelling."

The original of this decrypt also cannot be found, although there is a handwritten reconstruction of the text. It is therefore impossible to determine whether the differences are simply the result of poor translations at a time when personnel were working under great strain, or if there was more than one message sent to the Task Force at about the same time. It seems most unlikely the Japanese would have transmitted the coordinates of the refuelling position but would rather have used a pre-arranged map reference. But, that aside, either message clearly indicates the Fleet was on the move and was about to refuel, suggesting that it was undertaking a long journey out of Japanese waters.

One place where the original decrypt, or decrypts, might be found is among the FECB files now with GCCS's Japanese diplomatic and operational intercepts held by the Foreign Office in London, who have so far refused all requests for them to be made available for public inspection.

During the next week, into the early days of December, Dutch Intelligence also had, by an analysis of signals and call signs, established that Japanese naval forces were concentrated near the Pescadores Islands (west of Formosa), and near the south coast of Hainan. General ter Poorten concluded[28] that the Japanese were about to launch a pre-emptive attack in the Pacific similar to the one they had made in 1904 at the start of hostilities against Russia. This information was given to the British and American liaison officers at *Kamer 14*, and the latter forwarded it to Washington where it was shown to General George Marshall.

Read together with the 27 November *JN25* decrypt, the *J19* "*Winds*" message, the orders from Tokyo (on 2 December) for Japanese embassies to destroy their cipher systems, and the increasingly gloomy tone of the long 13-part message to the Japanese Embassy in Washington sent in PURPLE, surely a very alarming pattern emerges. But were all these pieces of information ever in one place at one time? Or were they scattered around different groups of analysts, each working to their own set of priorities, so that no one person saw the complete picture? It must also be borne in mind that at the time there was a belief in Washington that the Japanese might be planning an attack on Russia, with Vladivostock as the initial target.

One also needs to remember that the Washington team of Japanese cryptanalysts was very small, terribly overworked, and quite overwhelmed by scraps of information that created what is known to the intelligence fraternity as "noise", which often diverts attention away from real gems of information.

THERE WERE, HOWEVER, other ominous portents. On 26 November Churchill sent a message to Roosevelt[29] which convinced the President that the Japanese were about to launch their simultaneous attacks in the Far East and Pacific. This may well have been the British FECB decrypt of the same *JN25* message that the Dutch also sent to Washington, indicating that the main Japanese battle fleet was on the move. Or it might have been the intelligence reports that Japanese convoys were moving southwards towards Indo-China.

But there is another possibility. On 19 November the Australian cruiser *HMAS Sydney* was lost, with her entire crew of 645 men, after an action with the German raider *Kormoran*, which was also sunk, but 318 of her crew survived.[30] By 24 November the Australian Navy was convinced that the *Sydney* had been sunk by a Japanese I-Class submarine operating in conjunction with the *Kormoran*, which machine-gunned the survivors to ensure there would be no witnesses to the incident.

IF, AS SEEMS LIKELY, Churchill told Roosevelt that the Japanese had already attacked and sunk an Allied warship, then the President would have been in no doubt as to their future intentions. What is unclear, however, is whether Roosevelt passed on Churchill's information about the *Sydney* to his Chiefs of Staff so that they could warn Admiral Kimmel and General MacArthur. Whatever Churchill's warning to the President contained, as far as the British government is concerned it must have been extremely

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[27] Information kindly supplied by John Costello (New York, July 1985). I am most grateful to Howard Baker; Cedric Brown; Dr Toby Carter; John Costello; Robert Eaddy (Ministry of Defence, New Zealand); Ralph Erskine; Robert Haslach; Mrs Jean Howard; Dr L. G. M. Jaquet; Professor Louis de Jong; Sir Stuart Milner-Barry; Professor G. C. McVittie; Michael Montgomery; and Lieut-Colonel H. L. Zwitzer (Deputy Chief, Royal Netherlands Army Archives) for their valuable comments and assistance in preparing this article.

[28] General ter Poorten (letter, 23 July 1960).

[29] Costello, *The Pacific War*, pp. 630-634.

[30] Michael Montgomery, *Who Sank the Sydney?* (1983).

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important and highly sensitive because the British files[31] containing this message are closed to public inspection "in the interests of national security" for 75 years (although it is always possible that US archival sources might ultimately prove more revealing).

But despite all the pieces in the intelligence jigsaw apparently being available, either (*1*) there was no single person able to make the correct interpretation, or (*2*) those who were in authority could not bring themselves to believe, notwithstanding the inevitability of war after months of fruitless negotiations, that Japan would dare mount such an audacious and strategically illogical attack. It is an unfortunate fact that fighting commanders, and political leaders, are often liable to ignore, underrate, and even despise, intelligence that runs contrary to their own views, particularly if the precise details of the source cannot, for reasons of security, be fully revealed.

HOWEVER GOOD the "intelligence technology" may be—and it is clear that by late 1941 the American, British, and Dutch cryptanalysts had singly and jointly penetrated every major Japanese diplomatic and operational cipher—in the end it is the quality of those individuals who collate and interpret the raw material that counts. They must be able to present their findings with a positive degree of showmanship and credibility, and not allow themselves be deflected simply because their views do not suit senior military leaders and politicians.

Despite some exotic theories propounding the "smoking gun" thesis, all available evidence on the attack on Pearl Harbor points to it being a combination of audacity and security on the part of a calculating enemy, and administrative lethargy largely resulting from years of peacetime penny-pinching that reduced America's ability to react swiftly to what should have been an obvious threat.

Pearl Harbor taught a political and military establishment a terribly costly lesson; but history has an uncanny habit of repeating itself. Forty-one years later, despite the expenditure of many hundreds of millions of pounds and dollars on every type of sophisticated intelligence hardware and expertise, with numerous rumours and warnings of war and sinister movements of ships and aircraft, Argentine marines stormed ashore to capture the Falkland Islands while the British Cabinet slept soundly in their beds.

[31] PREM 3 252/5 and 252/6B, PRO, Kew.

## Inheritance

I'm sure I remember the scalding heat of afternoon,
The flies' insistent lisping, whitewash flaking off the wall,
A sweet, close odour clinging like someone else's perfume.

Moma heavy in the wicker chair, Nan on the low stool.
They didn't chat, Moma didn't ask me to hold the reel
Or pass the large, black-handled scissors. As the light dissolved

I stole past her lap to rest in her breasts' capital V.
I must have fallen into sleep, then woke as she stiffened
And put me to the floor. Not until then did I see him,

Shoulders hunched clear of the lintel, fingers peeling pieces
Of leather from the hat he held in both hands. Nan's patois
Scratched at his guilt: "So why ya na bring back what she ask ya?"

"I forget it." Moma's face clenched. I'm sure her features were
Blacker then, almost blue-black. Struggling to stand before him,
Vacant, exhausted, she was a woman in withdrawal.

Watching him go from the yard, she stroked her left hand over
Her buttock as if she could assuage the tormenting pain.
And Nan's hinged voice again: "You'll leave that baby marked, lover."

*Adrian Blackledge*

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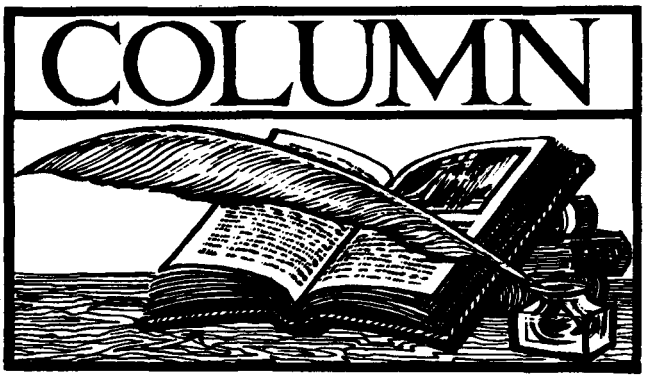


"A BRUNETTE JANE was lying there, half out of the mussed covers. . . . She was as dead as vaudeville." *Spicy Detective*, March 1938, quoted (or invented?) by the late S. J. Perelman. I note it for the date, not the spice. Had vaudeville died already? Many acts, of course, had—especially on Monday nights. But in Britain, at least, "variety" was still flourishing in the 1940s. It was always corny, and grew cornier as the pit orchestras dwindled to meet rising wage bills. Yet the troupers soldiered on: the check-suited comedian with his gormless "feed"; the artistic acrobats; the mousey "impressionist"; the stand-up solo comic, living on his nerves; the dreadful ladylike songstress; the xylophone virtuoso; the sentimental duettists with their "selection" from *The White Horse Inn*. Echoes of their archaic routines could still be caught in odd places long afterwards: a sad old man doing Hitler imitations in a Luxembourg night-club, or a high-wire cyclist in the "*Varietà*" interval at a fleapit cinema in Rome. By the 1960s, though, the music-hall was moribund. Its final crutch or walking-frame, as Roger Wilmut recalls in a poignant, nostalgic, and very funny memoir,[1] was the radio or TV star, whom the punters came to see "in the flesh."

Were they disappointed? Did the star look fatter, shorter, older, wearier, nastier than they'd hoped? Was the live act less polished than the broadcast tape? Was there the same anti-climax as when visiting a dressing-room after the show? Never mind: the image, heard or seen, had been made "real." Two worlds had joined.

That, of course, didn't save vaudeville. Social change put paid to it. And yet the legitimate theatre, under similar threat, sought a similar remedy. Backers of plays, as well as of seedy pantomimes, took out insurance by recruiting television stars to top the bill. No matter if they couldn't project: there was a PA system. No matter if they'd poor stage presence: the director could position them for effect. So, many plays became mere vehicles—not for giants of the theatre, but for what looked on the small screen like marionettes.

Admittedly, all's fair in love and desperation. What's less fair is the effect on talented actors. Take Rowan Atkinson—a brilliant, rubber-faced comedian, recalling Joe E. Brown or Stan Laurel, and combining the slyness of Harry Langdon, the intelligence of Buster Keaton, the wit of Groucho, and the malice of W. C. Fields. Give him his own material, and all comparisons scatter. Star him in *The Nerd*, and he'll just about salvage it: but he'll half drown in the attempt.

Penelope Keith is another star who's lately been hitched to some rickety wagons. She'll survive, no doubt, when jaunting-cars like *The Dragon's Tail*, her current vehicle, have gone to the breaker's yard. She's commanding, skilful, knowingly responsive—a tall, falcon-eyed, organising figure, gym-mistress of all she surveys. Yet, as she strides about, there's comforting complicity with the audience: they know, as she does intermittently, that all this brisk assurance is mere patter and bluff.

She made her name on television in *The Good Life*, a situation comedy about back-garden ecology freaks. There, she was the snobbish suburban neighbour, distressed by untidiness and manure. Her star billing came in a further sit-com, by Christopher Bond, *To the Manor Born*, which recently completed a successful rerun and deserves to be seen elsewhere. What makes it, and Penelope Keith, worth more than a glance and a smile is the deeper chord they strike in a British audience in the troubled 1980s. Did someone at the back say "emblematic"?

If you've not seen the series, I'd better explain that the heroine of *To the Manor Born* is "Audrey fforbes-Hamilton", heir to the big house, but obliged by taxes to sell it and move into the lodge. The new owner is "Richard DeVere." His name, and his voice as played by Peter Bowles, sound more aristocratic than "Audrey": but no. "Richard", with his Guards moustache and public-school accent, is not only a rich business tycoon. He's also a vulgarian who lands by helicopter on the ancient lawn. Worse still, he's not even British: his mother, who groans and cringes in the background, is a "Mrs Polouvicka", complete with central-European broken English.

Culture-conflict, disdain, and envy are the steel, flint, and tinder in this age-old comedy of impoverished gentility versus upstart wealth. "Richard", when he's not in his chopper, drives flash new cars; "Audrey" owes the repair bills on her vintage Rolls-Royce. "Richard" plans prairies to mechanise his farming; "Audrey" and her friends, squinting and whingeing from the lodge, are determined to preserve what thoughtlessness might destroy. On this, as on other points, the Devil hasn't all the best tunes. "Audrey" may be overbearing, but in your heart you know she's right. So, in the end, does "Richard." The last episode sees them married, squaring the circle, encircling the squire, and making it hard to imagine a suitable sequel.

EVEN IN DETAIL, all this is very near the knuckle. The real setting for *To the Manor Born* is a Somerset stately home. When I went there by chance after the TV crews had departed, I found it in something like the plight endured by "Audrey." To make ends meet, the family had not only invited television in: they were running a wildlife park; and the lady of the manor was selling delicious home-made ice-cream. No Polouvicka-DeVere rescue was in prospect; but there was talk of purchase by some foreign firm. Life, as usual, was parodying soap-opera.

It's a parody that touches more than just the landed gentry, whether with DeVere affinities or not. The British are

[1] *Kindly Leave the Stage: The Story of Variety 1919-1960*. By ROGER WILMUT. Methuen, £12.50.



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notoriously fond of the country-house daydream: the great good place, for millions, is the rambling mansion in rolling parkland, untroubled by reeling accountants. As a paradigm, it appeals to even modest members of the middle classes, who've seen themselves as "beleaguered" ever since cheap domestic service disappeared. "Audrey" lived in a grander version of their own reduced circumstances; "Richard" was the bully with the BMW from the "detached" house on the moneyed side of town. In that respect, *To the Manor Born* reflected domestic concerns.

Only slightly less obvious was its political and national resonance. Some might see the assertive "Audrey" as a pastoral version of Mrs Thatcher; but a present-day Britannia was nearer the mark. Impoverished ancient lineage—style—makeshift resourcefulness: idealised British qualities confronted the ruthless drive of the crude foreigner, but in a battle he had already lost by adopting the guise of a gentleman. It was the Greeks and the Romans all over again. When "Richard" and "Audrey" married, the Greeks could consummate their cultural victory. God was in his Edwardian heaven: all was right with a manageable world.

COMFORTING MYTHS are one sign of decadence, balm to the bruised national spirit, plastic padding for dented pride. In the United States, the equivalent is *Rambo*, fictionally avenging the slights and indignities that Americans have suffered in Viet Nam, Iran, the Lebanon, and elsewhere. It's a moot point whether *Rambo*'s preposterous violence is unhealthier than the whimsical escapism of *To the Manor Born*. What's clear is that nations need such safety-valves. As Britain and France have both shown in recent years, and America may show in the future, forfeiting supremacy is a painful process. Even acknowledging one's limitations is hard. If wrongly handled, it can lead to serious trouble. The trick is to recognise the symptoms in good time. Here then, for what it's worth, is a check-list of early warnings that the Audrey fforbes-Hamilton syndrome is about to strike.

*1. Excessive nostalgia.* Beware a nation whose advertisements glorify the Old West, Napoleon, Garibaldi, Hindenburg, or bewhiskered rustics speaking Mummerset. Beware carriage lamps on Hampstead housefronts; beware log cabins and exposed beams. Beware television costume dramas, and detective novels set in the Middle Ages. Beware politicians who promise to make this country great again. Beware Generals. Beware pageants. Beware *son et lumière*: it usually signifies something.

*2. Bread and circuses.* Watch out for the Good Food connoisseur. Distrust gourmet sex recommendations. Keep away from shops selling Health. Restaurant guides will rob you in exchange for ephemeral salivation; rows of how-to books will moulder in the outhouse. A sure sign of fforbes-Hamiltonism is an obsession with private sensation—palatal, genital, visual, aural. Plain living and high thinking may be repulsive: high living and hardly thinking are worse. So beware of a nation of cookbook readers, wine snobs, wholefood fanatics, joggers, hi-fi experts, gluttons, dieters, love machinists, home brewers, single malt fanciers, and denouncers of all these.

*3. Ritual.* The essence of ritual is to perpetuate form at the expense of substance. It has its uses, as in Max Beerbohm's *Happy Hypocrite*, where the beneficent mask becomes the face. Some rituals may rescue backsliders or recruit for bad reasons adherents who remain for good. But when the ritual becomes the main endeavour, it's surely time to start worrying. Church parade is no substitute for church. Question Time in the House of Commons is no substitute for debate. Razzmatazz party conventions are no substitute for democracy. A nation that's best at state funerals, royal weddings, and coronations risks becoming a nation of impresarios, actors, and drum majorettes.

*4. Super-patriotism.* This can take many forms. Least sinister is bombast, too obvious to ignore. Bullfrog chauvinism like Mussolini's or Galtieri's contained the scenario for its own comeuppance. It's the smoother customers who get away with it: the more *deftig* Dutch, latently Calvinist; the righteous neutralists; the moral exemplars ("a disarmed Britain would set a moral example to the world"). Effortless superiority, or superciliousness, used to be the mark of the Englishman, monocled to quiz the Calais wogs, black-tied for jungle dinners. Now it's often found among dollar spenders or lenders, offering Wall Street wisdom to the Third World. Its Gallic counterpart is cultural—*le rayonnement de la civilisation française*, whereby Africans learn the language of Racine and the accent of the Paris *faubourgs*. And the seamy side of this over-varnished picture is xenophobia, usually against Americans, but also against ethnic minorities in our midst. Here, as in other fields, the extremes of Left and Right converge.

*5. Self-denigration.* The depressive phase of the same disease produces contrary symptoms. Beware, by all means, anyone who uses the adjective of his nation's name as an automatic commendation: "Un-American activities", "*impossible n'est pas français*", or (proudly) "British Made." But run a mile, no less rapidly, from those for whom the adjective means the opposite. *An Evening of British Rubbish* was an evening in the theatre to avoid.

*6. Cults and superstitions.* They flourished in Byzantium, and in the later days of the Roman Empire. "Audrey", so far as I remember, didn't tell fortunes by Tarot cards. But astrology, oriental dabbling, Mohican hair-dos, Black Magic, nose studs, and general wayoutery—all seem to be symptoms that society isn't working as it should, at least for minorities. So beware the weirdos: they want more attention, more satisfaction, more power.

*7. Jocularity.* Beware, finally, the perpetual jokers. Besotted by television entertainment, they set up as comics themselves. Some are a riot: they glorify the day. But the drip-feed tedium of feeble wisecracks debilitates work and leisure. Being loved, or laughed with, becomes the aim of every social exchange, even at the counter or the till. No one dares to be serious or boring. Everything, finally, is mocked. Taxed with frivolity, its perpetrators cite the 18th century and its robust satire. But that's very different from dim conformist sneers. These, to my mind, are symptoms of disappointed decline.

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IF THE CAP fits, do something about it. What?

Mainly, I suggest, regain a sense of proportion. As the world moves on, with new nations acquiring technology, old options becoming impossible, and sheer numbers demanding food, wealth, education, and influence, the balance of power is bound to change. Former colonial nations have shed their empires; struggles for new dependencies or for national independence continue on every continent. No country, now, is to the manor born: no country can risk behaving like Rambo. All need to recognise their tiresome lack of omnipotence. The old acts no longer work. They don't attract the public. If they did, the result could be catastrophic. *Sic transit gloria belli.*

The alternative is drabber than military prowess or unbridled power. It involves dreary negotiation, slow procedures, bureaucratic institutions, and irksome rules. It also implies some measure of equality. The *nouveau-riche* "Richard" can't tame the exalted "Audrey": the United States can't turn proud, troublesome, squabbling Europeans into more sensible allies overnight. But they could become more united, and so more equal to the Americans—an "Audrey" equipped to curb the excesses of her spouse. So "Richard" too must learn some modesty. It's not just "Audrey" that he has to face.

Can such a new performance bring in the customers? It certainly makes life hard for national governments. The US Administration has to quell domestic protectionists. European leaders have to persuade their voters that deterrence still makes sense. Everywhere, nationalistic urges have to be held in check. How—and how long—can such a complex show be kept on the road?

One answer may lie in an unexpected quarter. Vaudeville is dead: long live working-men's clubs. Old human impulses—for fellowship, admiration, knowledge, wonder, and fun—don't disappear altogether; they find other outlets. The social conditions that created first the music-halls, then "variety", have changed out of all recognition. So have those that made possible patriotic fervour. But what were the patriots seeking? Safety, prosperity, influence, and a sense of community. It's the job of our political masters of ceremonies to trust the customers more, take them into their confidence, and show them how much the latest attractions outshine old familiar routines.

*M*

## Ganges: Hardwar

The wide river washing away sins
Consumes the leaf-boats heaped with lights and flowers
That hope has cast; dances them to the bend
Before they break and sink and disappear.

The patient multitude are satisfied.
Their names are added to their fathers' names
On pilgrim scrolls; bathed, forgiven, they wait
Daylong, steadfast on the stone quays,
Their children dabbling at the roaring brink.

The bright green snake is satisfied:
Thrown back, after all, by idle boys,
Zipping away, safe in the holy flood
Where big complacent fish patrol for bread,
Thrashing over and over the same stretch.

We travellers were nothing satisfied:
At angles to all this, touched with envious rage
Among believers; godless and alone
In the hutch of self. Darkness moved across.

Looking, looking, looking, hours we stood:
Fire at the temple window, drums below,
The racing river and the steady bell.

*Mary Sullivan*

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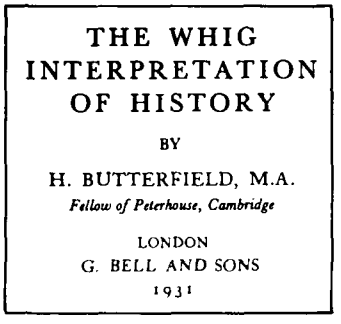
# The War Against the Whigs

## *Butterfield's Victory . . . & Defeat—By* GEORGE WATSON


THE WHIG
INTERPRETATION
OF HISTORY
BY
H. BUTTERFIELD, M.A.
*Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge*
LONDON
G. BELL AND SONS
1931

IN 1931 Herbert Butterfield's *Whig Interpretation of History* appeared: and by now its assault on the distortions of the vantage-point has turned into an orthodoxy in the English-speaking world. The book "brought to an end", a living historian has said, "an epoch of historical writing"[1]: and when Butterfield died in 1979, an obituary in these pages by George Gale, a Cambridge pupil, proclaimed that the book had "finished off for good the cosy notion that English history was a pretty smooth and undoubtedly designed and masterly progression from tyranny to liberty and from poverty to wealth" (ENCOUNTER, November 1979). The anti-Whig nowadays speaks with the confidence of one who brooks no argument. He believes he has won. He has discredited not just a long liberal tradition of political interpretation, that is, but the wider humanistic view that history could never teach us how to govern or to live, or that patterns and recurrences are ever reasonably to be sought in the past. At least among professional historians in Anglo-America, the humanistic sense of history as a moral fable has by now become a matter for detached debate or easy derision.

That is to turn the tables on the Whigs. "Our ancient history is the possession of the Liberal", Freeman wrote in 1872,[2] with similar confidence. No era of history is now that. In fact two recent books on the 19th-century English mind—J. W. Burrow's *A Liberal Descent* (1981) and *That Noble Science of Politics* (1983) by Stefan Collini, Winch, and Burrow—look set to confirm Butterfield's claims, though not without the echo of a sigh for enviable moral certitudes vanished, as they suppose, beyond recall. *That Noble Science* calls itself anti-Whig in its very prologue, in fact, and specifically so in Butterfield's non-party use of the term—scorning the notion that history could ever help us to draw "nourishment, or some other form of comfort, from the past. . . ." As in the Butterfield obituary in ENCOUNTER, it is simply taken for granted here that Whiggism was an optimistic creed. And the triumphant anti-Whig stands ever-vigilant in our age to repel any attempt at revival. A new study of the parliamentary crisis of the 1750s, J. C. D. Clark's *Dynamics of Change* (1982), complains darkly that Whiggism may secretly have survived the attacks of Butterfield and Lewis Namier under guiltily assumed names, "to provide foundations for new misrepresentations", and that it may need rooting out of its underground hide-outs to be exterminated anew.

All this strenuous *machismo* is surely very odd. Historians are commonly amiable in their private lives, which tend to be quietly herbivorous in tempo and almost tediously respectable in style. Perhaps all that explains, in part, why they are so eager in public to look hard-faced, cynical and world-weary. At all events, it is notable that only the boldest among them in Anglo-America today would dare openly to moralise history, and he would know that he risked the lively disapprobation of his colleagues if he did. In some Continental traditions, it is true, like the *Annales* school in France, didactic theories fitfully survive. But with exceptions mainly on the extreme Right and Left, the Butterfield view of 1931 is largely triumphant throughout academic history in English, and conservatives can be as anti-Whig as Marxists. Past events, as the Tory Michael Oakeshott wrote years ago in "The Activity of Being an Historian" (1955), "have no over-all pattern or purpose, lead nowhere, point to no favoured condition of the world, and support no practical conclusion. . . ." Except *that* conclusion, one is inclined sceptically to murmur. There are no lessons in history, in the extreme anti-Whig view, except that there are none. Burke, Macaulay, and Acton were wrong.

I want to ask whether so widespread an acceptance of anti-humanism, and more especially of anti-Whiggery, can be remotely justified as argument or as principle. And for that purpose I shall confront two related issues in turn: whether there are patterns of recurrences in history at all, as humanists believe; and if so, whether they are Whig.

[1] Owen Chadwick, *Freedom and the Historian: an Inaugural Lecture* (1969), p. 37—a lecture largely devoted to his late Whiggish colleague G. M. Trevelyan. P. B. M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism* (The Hague, 1978), has shown that Butterfield's 1931 essay summarised a mood common among British historians since the 1890s, and attracted less attention at the time than Lewis Namier's early writings. See also J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (1957) on an earlier doctrine of continuity, among 17th-century historians.

[2] E. A. Freeman, *The Growth of the English Constitution from the Earliest Times* (1872), p. viii.



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# Patterns & Recurrences

IF RECURRENCES DID NOT HAPPEN in history, it is hard to see how we could use words. I choose the milder term "recurrence", since patterns are usually thought of as repeating at exact intervals. A recurrence, then, is a loose pattern. The larger movements of heavenly bodies are patterned: so are the four terrestrial seasons. Political and social events are not often like that unless, like Presidential elections in the United States, they are created by human fiat in fixed terms. But then even those who propose bold laws of human flux, like Nietzsche in the last century or Spengler or Arnold Toynbee in this, seldom suggest that events return at stated periods.

It could only be strenuously absolute or paradoxical to deny the humanistic claim that events recur. Humanism is based on a recognition that recurrences and likenesses are not only more significant than differences, but indispensable to understanding ourselves and others. In a preface to Plutarch (1683), for example, John Dryden remarked in classic style that history is not only entertaining but instructive, helping us "to judge of what will happen by shewing us the like revolutions of former times"—mankind being "the same in all ages, agitated by the same passions, and moved to action by the same interests." That classic view of history is one that Plutarch himself—or Erasmus, or Samuel Johnson—would have endorsed. It has few defenders nowadays among professional historians, who have strenuously trained themselves to discern distinction rather than likeness. But then that training can sometimes involve a stubborn, partisan misunderstanding of what humanism once meant.

Writing only five years before the English Revolution, Dryden did not seek to deny that all human revolutions are distinct: only that what they have in common could be any less significant than the respects in which they differ. He held that likenesses come first. And rightly: for if we did not believe that revolutions were alike, we should not use the same word to describe what happened in England in 1688-89, in France a hundred years later, in Russia in 1917, and in Iran in 1979. And if we did not believe that the English, American, and Spanish civil wars were alike, we should not use the same term to describe all three. That is as clear when we disagree about terms as when we agree. There are some historians, for example—mainly from the Old South—who still prefer to call the American affair a War between the States, on the ground that an attempted secession like the 1861 Confederacy fails to meet what they hold to be a necessary requirement of all civil wars: that they should be fought, as Cromwell and Franco once fought, for power over a whole nation. In a similar way, to talk of revolution is tacitly to accept the notion of recurrence; and we are not easily dissuaded from doing that merely because one side or another rejects the term as inaccurate. Kerensky, during his long years of exile in California, refused to accept October 1917 as a revolution, preferring to call it a *putsch*—on the grounds that the real Russian revolution, which had put him into power, had occurred in the previous February. Historians have not usually been impressed by his argument; but when they speak of the October Revolution, they are not just weakly yielding to Bolshevik pressure or accepted usage: rather perceiving likenesses, as Dryden might have done, with other events that they similarly describe.

Butterfield rightly called an emphasis on likenesses the hallmark of the Whig interpreter like Macaulay or Acton, as it is of the humanist in general. The Whig is "vigilant for likenesses between past and present", he complained in 1931, "instead of being vigilant for unlikenesses. "But that is one of the oddest of disjunctions to be made here. We observe likenesses and unlikenesses as a single and continuous process, as the contested case of the American Civil War suggests. Likeness is not identity, and it would be a perverse objection to humanism to insist that every human event is ultimately unique. Uniqueness, as logicians are fond of telling us, is the commonest of logical properties; but we do not have to risk denying that to assert that likenesses count too. Those who rightly or wrongly deny that the United States had a civil war are comparing it with what Cromwell and Franco did as surely as those who affirm it. "Simon de Montfort was not Asquith in armour", I recently heard an anti-Whig historian scornfully remark. But whether de Montfort's assembly of 1265 is rightly called a parliament involves both sides of the argument, for and against, and not just the Whig. Indeed those whose avowed interest is in the uniqueness of events cannot begin to judge a single event to be unique without first comparing it with other and similar cases; and for that purpose they would first need to perceive similarities to be there.

It may be objected that terms like civil war, revolution, and parliament are uninteresting instances of pattern or recurrence, and that pattern-mongers are usually hunting bigger game than triflingly lexical issues like these. With Nietzsche, Spengler, and Toynbee that was certainly true; equally with Marx and the Marxians. Even superstitiously progressive theories of history, denying return or regress as they must, accept recurrence in another sense—as Marxists have believed that proletarian revolution in one land, being "on the agenda of history", must inevitably recur in others. Whiggery is not vulnerable in that sense, since it embraces no dogma of inevitability; it studies the conditions by which human liberty can thrive and survive, but makes no claim that it must.

There are two large and initial weaknesses in the anti-Whig case here. One is to suppose that procedures as broadly obvious as naming revolutions, parliaments, or civil wars are not procedures at all, since they come so naturally to mind. But how naturally do they come? When the historian employs such terms, he can easily forget how much of the business of comparison and connection-seeing is built into the very words he imagines uncontroversial and uncommittal. A dissentient instance like the American Old South, or Kerensky, at least serves to show how controversial and committal they really are. And they do not cease to be that merely because we forget they are so. The humanist case in general, and the Whig in particular, is far stronger than we have recently allowed. True, the Butterfieldian does not openly deny that such terms are committal: it might be fairer to say that he has not noticed it. He certainly dogmatises as if he had not.

The second anti-Whig defence, as rash as the first, is to

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argue as if belief in historical recurrence would require us to accept any theory of recurrence that there is, however wild. And yet nobody imagines that a belief in uniqueness requires us to accept any claim that might be made to call an event unique. Of course certain grand theories of history are simply fatuous. So, for that matter, are some factual claims. But exposing the "laws" of Toynbee's *Study of History* as truistic or false does no serious damage to humanism—just as studies in the Bacon-wrote-Shakespeare tradition do no serious damage, on a long view, to the study of facts.

The humanist case stands. If there were no recurrences or patterns in history, there could be no language; and if no language, no historians.

## *Whigs & Anti-Whigs*

So much for the wider case for historical humanism. The case for the Whig interpretation needs to be far more specific.

In 1819 Lord John Russell, a future Prime Minister of England, ended a biography of his martyred ancestor Lord William Russell, executed with others by Charles II for treason in 1683, in ringing terms:

> "It is to their spirit, and to the spirit of men like them, rather than to any unalterable law, that we owe the permanency and the existence of our ancient constitution."

Russell was to alter that ancient constitution himself a dozen years later, in 1832, with the first Reform Act; and the remark can be accepted as a classic statement of Wig interpretations of English political history by one determined to make more of the same. That at least disposes of the easy charge of complacency. It was not an unalterable law of history that made English liberty, but the readiness of men to die for it; and it is a mindless slander on the Whigs to suppose that they thought of human progress as inevitable or even easy. Though Macaulay was an optimist, Acton could be monumentally pessimistic; and the entire tradition of Whig historiography is neither clearly bright nor clearly grey. It is, however, clearly striving. The Risorgimento, G. M. Trevelyan once wrote, "was not inevitable, but was the result of wisdom, of valour, and of chance."[3] Of *chance*: the Butterfieldian view may not be reliably determinist, but the Whig view is always reliably anti-determinist. That is what makes the phrase I initially quoted so strikingly unjust: "to draw nourishment or some other form of comfort from the past." The Whig does not draw only comfort from the past; not even mainly that. He praises the valour of heroic men whether they succeeded or failed, and his lessons can be bitter. "Laws exist in vain for those who have not the courage and the means to defend them", wrote Macaulay starkly in 1832 in his essay on Burleigh, during the Reform Bill crisis. More like a cold shower than comfort. The Whig past is not cosy but strenuous, and one sometimes has to die for it.

By 1849, when Macaulay's *History of England* began to appear, there were cautious hopes of a peaceful solution to constitutional crisis. But the anti-Whig seems blandly unimpressed by that surprising outcome in the first industrial nation on earth. Butterfield denied there were any general conclusions to be drawn, here or elsewhere:

> "The value of history lies in the richness of its recovery of the concrete life of the past."

he wrote, and its meaning cannot be conveyed by "dry lines" or by any "species of geometry." But it can. Diagrams can have the truth that belongs to diagrams, which can be just the sort of truth that is needed. There is a well-known diagram of the London Underground by which travellers find their way; its value would not be enhanced, and might easily be impaired, by greater richness of detail. Many in the 1830s believed that parliamentary reform was necessary to preserve ordered liberty, and that Tennyson's poetic diagram of broadening precedent, or one thing at a time, was the safest way ahead:

> *Where Freedom slowly broadens down*
> *From precedent to precedent. . . .*

—a better way, as their reading of the 17th century suggested, than a more violent path taken by Pym and Cromwell after 1642. A double shift towards industrialism and political democracy was achieved in England without bloodshed. No other European nation could do it; no other nation did it. And if the geometry of the Whig interpretation did not contribute massively to that achievement, then we need to be told why actors and observers alike believed at the time that it did. The easy notion that they were all mistaken is surely too easy.

The anti-Whig is avidly fond of attacking his adversaries for over-simplistic moral judgments, as if Whiggery and priggery were much alike. Butterfield opened his essay in 1931 with a claim that Whig assertions were in their nature over-simple:

> "One may be forgiven for not being too happy about any division of mankind into good and evil, progressive and reactionary, black and white."

He complains elsewhere of "simple and absolute judgments", and of the Whig "abridgement of history"—only possible, he believed, because in that tradition "all the facts" are never told "in all their fullness." Knowingly or unknowingly, that echoes an ampler plea for factual many-sidedness that Stubbs had made over 60 years before in an Oxford inaugural of 1867, where he placed these truths high among the lessons of history, though without Butterfield's dogmatism:

> "that there are few questions on which as much may not be said on one side as on the other; that there are none at all on which all the good are on one side, all the bad on the other; or all the wise on one, and all the fools on the other."[4]

Telling all the facts in all their fullness. . . . But is it even *possible* to write history in that way? Butterfield compares the

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[3] G. M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Thousand* (1909), p. 5.

[4] William Stubbs, *An Address Delivered by Way of Inaugural* (1867), pp. 26-7.

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historian to a witness rather than to a judge or jury, and does not seem to understand how fatal to his own case that analogy is. For if a witness were allowed to tell all the facts he knew, he would never finish; and if he never finished, the trial would not.

Butterfield might reply that when he speaks of facts here—"all the facts . . . in all their fullness"—he means all the facts relative to the question. But the decision whether a fact is relative to a question is a decision for a judge, not for a witness. The historian does not cease to resemble a judge, then, when he undertakes to tell us what he knows. Years ago, Sir Karl Popper used to ask his class in Vienna to write down everthing they could observe, prompting some understandable puzzlement; and he tells the story to illustrate the ultimate poverty of induction:

> "Observation is always selective. It needs a chosen object, a definite task, an interest, a point of view, a problem."[5]

The real question is not whether judgments are made: it is whether they are well made. There is no escaping judgment.

ANTI-WHIGS OFTEN SUPPOSE that judgments of value are merely personal or subjective. Butterfield opened his essay in 1931 with a brief disparagement of "partial judgments and purely personal appreciations" as opposed to reliably expert pronouncements on matters of fact; and towards the end of his essay, where he opens his main attack on Acton, his deeper convictions about the necessary subjectivism of value-judgments become disarmingly clear:

> "Such judgments are those of the historian himself; their value is the measure of his acuteness; their bias is the clue to the inclinations of his mind. They are not the judgments of history, they are the opinions of the historian."

And again:

> ". . . The problem of their sinfulness is not really an historical problem at all. . . . Moral responsibility lies altogether outside the particular world where the historian does historical thinking."

And his reasons are twofold: that it is difficult or impossible to win agreement on points of morality; and equally so to "find the incidence of these upon any particular case."

Well, nobody in our times has ever thought history was easy. But why should moral truth, or any other kind, be thought to depend on agreement? Much that is true is unagreed, and none the less true for that. Flat-earthers contest the rotundity of the globe; historians contest among themselves the origins of the First World War; and in law the accused is liable to punishment whether he believes murder or forgery to be wrong or not, and courts do not even seek his agreement on such matters. We do not *need* agreement about the truth in order to have truth, and it is not even reasonable to expect it or to want it. "Without contraries", said Blake, "no progression."

The difference between the factual and the moral, in any case, is not at all like the difference between what is agreed, or even agreeable between the contesting parties, and what is not. Historians disagree about points of fact as well as about morality. That is why factual disagreements like those over the origins of the 1914 war are fertile and welcome. In his Cambridge inaugural of 1895 Acton invited his audience to remember Charles Darwin

> "taking note only of those passages that raised difficulties in his way; the French philosopher complaining that his work stood still because he found no more contradicting facts."[6]

since it is only by considering objections that we learn. To conclude that moral judgments are not agreed, then, does nothing to put them outside what Butterfield once called "historical thinking." It might rather put them in.

If it were sufficient to show that no agreement is to be had to call an issue subjective, then many highly factual issues in history would be subjective. And if the reverse were true, then many moral issues like the modern condemnation of slavery would be objective. But of course the difference between objective and subjective judgments is nothing like the difference between what is agreed and what is not.

NOR IS IT CLEAR that value-judgments are distinguishable from factual statements. If the historian is a witness, then witnesses too often have views on the guilt of the accused; and such views are plainly factual and evaluative at the same time. It is a factual matter whether the accused is a forger or a murderer, or which government must bear the heaviest responsibility for a war; and a value-judgment too, since it is better to be innocent than guilty. (Not just better for the accused or his reputation, but better absolutely.) When Acton, in a note on the detested Inquisition, wrote bluntly "They sent forth murderers", his assertion was factual and evaluative too. We do not abandon the evaluative function in history, as positivists imagine, when we confine ourselves to facts. Facts can be values too.

BUTTERFIELD'S NAIVE POSITIVISM was proclaimed, it may be recalled, in 1931, or some years before the writings of Sir Karl Popper or R. G. Collingwood on such matters were widely available to historians. Philosophically speaking, his view was not entirely old-fashioned at the time; but it is astonishing that historians have questioned it so little since. It is still common to hear them talk as if preconceptions were a regrettable personal intrusion into historical research, rather like catching mumps—to be dismissed as bias, or prejudice, or (in the most severely reductive sense of the word) ideology.

But historians *need* preconceptions to work at all, and they are under no obligation to apologise for what they cannot dispense with. Any expedition, even the most scientific, starts

[5] Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963), p. 46, from a Cambridge lecture of 1953.

[6] Lord Acton, *The Study of History* (1895), p. 55.

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from home; any enquiry starts from somewhere. In a chapter called "Question and Answer", Collingwood in his *Autobiography* (1939) has justly complained how absurd it would be to read an author, or excavate a site, without starting from a testable hypothesis as to what author or builder meant when he wrote or planned. It is no serious objection if Whig historians have investigated English political history to discover how one nation exceptionally established for itself a continuous rule of law that lasted for decades and even centuries. Their answers may be right or wrong. But it was not wrong to ask the question, or to try to answer it.

Butterfield's model of piling facts higher and higher in the hope of an ever richer complexity is in the end an absurdity. An absurdity, fortunately, that he preached but did not practise. *The Whig Interpretation of History* is a suavely shaped and sharply worded historical polemic in a rhetorical tradition that owes much to Macaulay; and if it had tried to follow its own stockpiling precepts it would never have been written at all.

BENEATH ANTI-WHIGGERY, in our times, has lain a terror of anachronism: an echoing insistence that historical events are best interpreted in terms of their own age rather than of one's own.

Butterfield repeatedly inveighs against judging matters "apart from their context"; and in an exceptionally interesting analysis near the end of his essay he comes astoundingly close, for so gentle and virtuous a man, to condoning persecution and political murder:

> "Faced with the poisonings of which Alexander VI is accused, it is for the historian to be merely interested, merely curious to know how such things came to happen. . . ."

He even invites his ideal historian to set moral judgments to one side "for the time being"—striving rather to "explain how Mary Tudor came to be what she was." That approaches extreme dogmatic relativism—at least for the time being. But ambiguously. For it is uncontroversial, no doubt, to suggest that we should refrain from condemning the Smithfield burnings of Protestants till the pertinent facts are clear; and helpful to urge an historian not to write like a prude or a ranter. But does the advice stop there? Acton has been more recently attacked in similar terms for his "heavily moral attitudes" and a naive "astonishment at the commonplace."[7] And the old anti-Whig ambiguity remains: does all that mean morality must be excluded from history altogether, or merely admitted in a lighter vein? (Strange to accuse Acton, of all people, of doubting that religious persecution has been commonplace in human history.) There are undeniable differences in pace and tone, between Victorian historiography and our own. But those differences are not always to the advantage of the moderns; and those who complain of the style of Macaulay and Acton should pause to ask which of us can write half so well.

## *In & Out of Context*

THE DEMAND TO SEE EVERYTHING in its context, and only there, remains an odd one: all the odder because Butterfield himself can occasionally see how odd it is. Whether as historians or as readers, we are what we are. "History must always be written from the point of view of the present", he concedes cautiously—the historian's task being mainly to translate the past into terms to be understood today. But translation is nothing like enough, and no hint is offered of the host of limiting cases that there are. Suttee, for example: one thing to explain the forced suicide of widows and its conditioning circumstances; another by word or silence to condone it. Butterfield wrote before the advent of Hitler, and his entire argument has a cosily academic air about it, as if at once pre-Bolshevik and pre-Nazi. Totalitarianism was outside his imagination. On the first day of the Second World War he stopped a Cambridge colleague in the street, it is said, and remarked: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if neither side won?" But a later book, *The Englishman and his History* (1944), shows that such lofty relativism did not survive the War. In that generous retraction he regretted a "misguided austerity of youth" that had possessed him a dozen years earlier, and warned that a room swept clean "cannot long remain empty." Knowing the past is not a luxury for professionals, as he came to see. We need history, and the interpretations of historians, to live at all.

But the retraction was not widely credited, and the dogmatic demand for context-and-nothing-but has not ceased since Butterfield wrote. In some quarters it has grown even more ardent and extreme. We now have the "misuse of the vantage-point", and the "mythology of prolepsis" or anticipation. Events can only mean what their agents meant by them, it is said: absurd, then, to see Petrarch's ascent of Mount Ventoux in 1336 as the dawn of the Renaissance, or to suppose that John Locke anticipated liberal theories of the state.

> "No agent can eventually be said to have meant or done something which he could never be brought to accept as a correct description of what he had meant or done"[8]

—though psychoanalysis is instantly admitted as offering some awkward exceptions. So Marsilius of Padua cannot have contributed to the Enlightenment debate on the separation of powers, it is said, since he did not intend to do so; and because Locke did not mean to anticipate Berkeley's metaphysics, it is meaningless to say that he did.

And yet people often do what they had no intention of doing. Napoleon destroyed his army by invading Russia; and that is true whether he could be brought to accept it or not. The Emperor Franz Josef of Austria is famous for having earnestly remarked, as the First World War dragged

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[7] Geoffrey Elton, introduction to J. N. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings* (1965); reprinted in Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, vol. 2 (1974), p. 195.

[8] Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", *History and Theory*, No. 8 (1969), p. 22 ff.

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miserably on: "This is not what I meant"; but few historians would think that in itself a reason to deny his share of responsibility for the war. Accountability can be as difficult in history as in courts of law; but it is seldom enough—though it is often something—to protest in all honesty that one meant well.

It is ultimately implausible, I suggest, to ask of the historian to abandon hindsight. The wisdom of hindsight is one of the best weapons that he has, and he has yet to hear sufficient cause why he should give it up. Petrarch on the mountain, like Locke writing his *Essay*, caused more than they intended, and probably more than they could ever have been brought to understand. Winston Churchill is said to have remarked on the fall of Singapore that only then could one understand the meaning of Pearl Harbor, which is a use of the vantage-point few would deny him. The intentions of agents at the time of acting are only one historical consideration among many. They may alter interpretations—much as a court might be swayed by evidence of intention in judging whether a violent death was manslaughter or murder. But whatever their verdict, the case starts with a corpse. What court or history-book has ever supposed that the probable intentions of the agents were all the evidence that there was?

It is often suggested, in reply, that the historian is concerned with what happened, rather than with the uses it can be put to in later ages—that Macaulay's emphasis, and Acton's, on what the past has to teach the present is fundamentally unprofessional and profoundly misconceived. But it is now possible to see that this argument is itself misconceived, being based on a disjunction between the past and its interpretation that is no more than a figment of the anti-Whig mind.

Butterfield himself came close to conceding exactly that, when he candidly remarked, and in evident embarrassment, that "history must always be written from the point of view of the present." It is a concession that, fatal as it is to his own case, speaks boldly for his intellectual honesty. For if history "must always" be so written, then it is vain to demand of the historian that he should write otherwise. And yet Butterfield's whole case in *The Whig Interpretation of History* is that the historian should write otherwise. In other words, he offers advice which, on his own account, cannot be taken. Hence the noisy rumble of argumentative gears as he almost (but not quite) excuses the crimes of Renaissance Popes and modern dictators. He cannot doubt, as a good man, that in the long run we have to come down against them. But how long is the long run?

It is the brisk certitude of Macaulay's judgments, or Acton's—"They sent forth murderers"—not their spirit, that appals him. It looks too easy. You do not need to be an historian to see that murder is murder, or that murder is wrong. But the anti-Whig historian is haunted by the suspicion that, if history is so easy that anyone can do it, then he is left with no special place to stand; and any professional wants to feel that he has a special place to stand: that he can do something that only he can do. In many professions, like surgery or the law, that special place is not in doubt. There is no room for amateurs there; and we consult professional surgeons and lawyers because we have no choice. In history, by contrast, there is all too much room for amateurs—or so the professional historian must occasionally feel, as he watches amateurs at play in weekly journals and Sunday newspapers. Whig historiography can be a best-selling activity, as Macaulay's *History of England* and Winston Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* both amply prove. Anti-Whig historiography, which perseveres in scholarly monographs and journals, harbours within it something of the grudging envy of the tired professional for the amateur's easy success.

THE ANTI-WHIG DISJUNCTION between events and interpretations is open to a larger objection. To put it at its simplest: if an event never occurred, then the historian (whether Whig or anti-Whig) has small grounds for interpreting it. In other words, the case against him lies not in his interpreting a non-event one way or another, but in his interpreting it at all. That summary needs to be enriched before it becomes convincing, and "event" is a term that needs to be broadly understood here, to include mental acts as well as physical.

Historians rightly discuss King Arthur, who may never have existed, and hypothetical questions like Hitler's unattempted invasion of England in 1940. That the Welsh believed in Arthur, that Hitler intended to invade, are after all events of a kind. Modern history, under anthropological influence, has been eager to pursue the study of mental events with regard to remote tribes and peoples—remote whether in place or in time. But out of a nagging fear of ethnocentricity, it has been profoundly reluctant to apply the same techniques, except destructively, to what for centuries the English-speaking peoples have admired in Magna Carta or the Revolution of 1689. It is notable that Conservatives like Michael Oakeshott have been as eager as Marxists to destroy Anglo-Saxon self-confidence here, as if a reasoned patriotism were the natural preserve of Whiggery, and one as foreign to the Tory mind as to the socialist. Edmund Burke's long eulogies of the English Revolution are seldom seen by Butterfieldians as anything better than blandly self-persuasive: a cosy myth to justify British self-conceit and an illusion of political superiority. But another possibility, which we entertain only secretively if at all, is that Burke may after all have been right about the English Revolution; and that, as Churchill in his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* plainly implied, those peoples are in truth uniquely qualified to teach.

Whig historians could plainly see that history is only instructive because it happened, and they nowhere defend distortion or invention. It is because Magna Carta and the English Revolution occurred, and only because they did, that their part in English constitutional evolution arises at all. The history of institutions, Stubbs wrote in the preface to *The Constitutional History of England* (1874):

> "abounds in examples of that continuity of life, the realisation of which is necessary to give the reader a personal hold on the past, and a right judgment of the

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present. For the roots of the present lie deep in the past, and nothing in the past is dead to the man who would learn how the present comes to be what it is."

"Abounds in examples. . . ." The interest of that passage lies in what Stubbs takes for granted: it is a real past, and not an invented past, that it is the task of the historian to present and interpret. Since it abounds in examples, he has no need to invent any; and it would not count if he did.

There is, after all, an alternative. Parents sometimes invent comfortable stories to tell small children; and dictatorships employ entire ministries, Goebbels-style, to invent flattering national myths. That is not the Whig way. Faced with the task of defending Macaulay, no one would say he distorted nothing. But it seems plain that he never held distortion to be justified; and his claim that the English Revolution of 1689 is the greatest event in modern political history would have no standing, as a claim, if it were supposed that he did not believe it happened, and happened with those causes and effects he proposed. It is precisely because 1689 occurred that it can teach the world how constitutional liberty is progressively gained and preserved. It is not propaganda, or a story for children. That is quite different from the arrogant relativism of modern totalitarians, who hold that, since truth is necessarily dependent on social or genetic conditioning, the state is entitled to create and enforce myths of history favourable to its own sense of an heroic role. "I am subjective", said Hermann Goering in the spring of 1933, shortly after Hitler's seizure of power. "I submit myself to my people"—adding that he thanked his maker for having created him "without what they call a sense of objectivity."

The totalitarian is openly committed to an invented view of the past, since objective truth (as he believes) is a bourgeois illusion. The Whig historian knows better.

## *Suspicion & Scepticism*

THE HUMANIST CASE for a moralised history remains eternally cogent—the more so because it was never meant to justify all the attempts at moralised history that there are. If there were no timeless concepts, we could not understand the past at all. T. S. Eliot, a humanist though no Whig, called history "a pattern/Of timeless moments" in *Little Gidding* (1942). He is unlikely to have supposed that it was only that: a carpet is always more than its pattern. But it remains wildly implausible to suggest that patterns and recurrences are never there. If they were never there, it is hard to see how we could understand events at all, whether in history or in our own lives, or use language to describe what we do understand.

The Whig interpretation of history has had strikingly few friends in the present century, and fewer than has sometimes been supposed in the last. Acton conceded in his 1895 inaugural that "the weight of opinion is against me when I exhort you never to debase the moral currency", calling on his audience of historians to suffer none "to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong." That was not, as he knew, the view of the most advanced German school of the age. The Whig interpretation has always been contested; and since it believes in contest, we may suppose that it has always sought it. No recent age has failed to make the vain attempt to compose unjudging history.

And behind that continuing attempt, not least in this century, there has often festered something impressively obstinate and deep: an intellectual suspicion of morality itself—its foundations, its coherence, its precarious stability in the face of bids to legitimate or discredit it. In many such attempts, as in Butterfield's, the moral effects of history are admitted, if at all, only surreptitiously and through back doors. There is muted applause in his 1931 essay for an intellectual effect he calls "richness", and it may be that he believed that a wealth of detail about the past might encourage a salutary sense of toleration. But that is guesswork. And where moral scepticism runs so deep, it can easily invade any sense of moral order that there is, whether inside history or out. There is far more than a sense of history at stake when Butterfield disdainfully quotes Acton's dictum that the achievement of history is "to develop and perfect and arm conscience." Acton's moral assurance was simply alien to the world that followed 1918; and alien to many still, as an unbroken tradition of anti-Whiggery shows.

BUT IT IS HARD TO SUPPRESS the suspicion, as the third centenary of the English Revolution approaches, that the glory of the Whig view of history has been lost sight of not through its failure but rather through the sheer longevity of its public success. By the mid-20th century we take civil order and law's rule for granted, and in a way that Burke, Macaulay, and even Acton never could. It is by now perilously easy to call a hatred of persecution "astonishment at the commonplace." Taking so much as settled, we feel fatiguingly safe, and ache to look bold.

And to that happy certitude of ordered liberty, at least in English-speaking lands, add a positivistic contempt for any argument, whether factual or moral, not bounded by verbal definitions and agreed criteria; and the unwarranted contempt into which the Whig interpretation of history has fallen can perhaps be explained.

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*Michael Foley*

# Heaven Is Waiting

There were five of us, awkward and overdressed
opposite this funny sign that said:
WAITING IS HELL BUT HEAVEN IS WAITING.
Well, it was funny all right—no hopers
stinking of Limbo and Purgatory
wanting the Heavenly power and glory
half-believing we'd swung it (as if
you could fox *that* Board—one look marked you
*typically chicken-shit nowhere guy*).
Zeros patiently waiting—all but Wright
a big cross baby, plump and bald, with
the clear glowing skin of the pampered-from-birth.
Desultory small talk wasn't for him.
He prowled, snapping, then turned with a snort:

"Bugger this crap. I'm off for a walk."

So headstrong! We hoped he'd be caught and shamed
perhaps even sent packing. No such luck.
Brass neck goes unpunished in Heaven too.
He got back as a lady, terribly
sweet and sincere (which of course you'd expect)
bustled in to say:
"This is the *hardest*
decision we've *ever* made here in Heaven.
We think you've all *so much* to offer and
we're sad there's just *one* post instead of *five*.
However. . ."
(eyes down!)
"a recommendation's
been made. Mr Wright, would you care to step
back in?"
Up he jumped as if to snort
*about time*, going by with a secret
smile our so-called impartial lady shared.
They were looking for Mr Wright . . . *of course*.

"Thank you *so much* for coming", she cooed now,
"You're *most welcome* to stay for lunch which it's
widely agreed is. . . ."
"Heavenly", I sneered
unsure who to hate most, them or myself
craving more than my earthbound peers—whom I
nevertheless didn't want to see yet.
A walk first, in the breeze, between Heaven
and earth—for one bountiful moment free.
Then, once again, my fellow nowhere guys.

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*Jean Hanff Korelitz*

# The Fruit Trees

Fresh from mail-order, they arrive;
impoverished on the doorstep, sticks
with their kinetic bases wrapped
in burlap: peach, plum, pear.

In the rise at the edge of the meadow, we plant
them. Father, our aim
is the improvement
of the property, or something
else, unnameable: the tired hand
that spreads out, labouring its upward
birth, explosions made of fruit, as angry
as first gasps of air.

Years they stick, immovable.
We water diligent, and turn
the earth; we wrap
them from the flies and wait. We're waiting
for the fold of generations, years to close
upon themselves like oriental fans, collapsing
daughter into father into earth.

They disappoint us, in their way: the plum
will birth no plums; the peach
bears little balls of fuzz the caterpillars
get. The pear's
our only hope, but we have pruned
our hoping: stillborn, first,
it had refused us. When you wanted
to uproot it I said no, a logic
only children give against
the obvious: "Don't pull it. It will grow."

And in the years past waiting, so it did:
a thieflike creep, it coiled
its ancestor until
that fell away, then grew, then reached
my father's height, then mine.

If we have failed, what's left
is what we do not speak of. There is pleasure
enough in the garden; what was planted
will survive us. Knowing this,
my father asks, now, to be buried
beneath those fruit trees.

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# NOTES & TOPICS

*London Commentary*

# What Paper Do You Read?

## *By Edward Pearce*

THE EARLY DEATH of Charles Douglas-Home, the Editor of *The Times*, is as good a point of departure for looking at the state of the quality press as any other. Douglas-Home deserved his high obituarial praise. Without question the received view of *The Times*—gone to the Goths, in quite barbarous hands, my dear fellow—has been proved foolish to a degree. Yet it was difficult to find a rational opinion on the subject until the rising tide of circulation had left cocktail conversation futtering like a row of bubbles under water.

The whole wretched business of chaining oneself to a tradition of being not-a-newspaper-but-an-institution used to affect senior figures on other serious papers with the same debilitating awe as a former Editor of *The Times*, some years back, would see in his shaving-mirror. Not a newspaper, part of our heritage; not a newspaper, an extension of civilisation—that sort of talk is for dowagers of all ages and sexes. A newspaper, except where it is a scream-sheet for the half-witted, has no higher function than to be a newspaper.

Not that *The Times* has too much to be proud of in its political and journalistic history. A fine institution to have grovelled to Stalin the way Barrington Ward did under the influence of E. H. Carr; some heritage to have thrown rose petals for Hitler to walk on in the fashion of Geoffrey Dawson! And one can never too often recall that John Walter set up his *Daily Universal Register*, shortly to be re-named, as a scandal-sheet which would make money in the margins of blackmail. Yet, to listen to some of the protesters at the Rupert Murdoch take-over, you would have supposed that vestal virgins were being instructed in the conduct of a bordello.

The intolerable snobbery of a certain sort of useless British type expected that a tradition (not actually a very good one) of bland, high-toned magisterialism should be sustained independently of the willingness of the public to buy the thing on the shelf. And a thing on a shelf requiring to be bought is what a newspaper is. For anyone to be so pretentious about a mere newspaper is . . . oh, let us just say "misconceived." The tantrums of Harold Evans, a man with a limitless disposition to self-projection; the grand exit of Hugo Young, a superb journalist a little pixillated with high purpose: these plus an extraordinary amount of petulant misinformation, culminating in the childish, nonsensical, and incompetent play *Pravda*, all missed the point. Either a newspaper pays for itself by sales and advertising revenue or somebody keeps it. Accordingly, most of Fleet Street belongs in the mistresses' villas of St John's Wood. The old, eccentric *Times* of Sir William Rees-Mogg—full-length leaders about "getting back to the Gold Standard", Peter Jay instructing two or three "really important readers" in Whitehall and Downing Street, plenty of space for Opera and Wine, no very discernible quantity of news, the whole thing a vast act of uneconomic self-indulgence—was so kept, though hardly used professionally, by Roy Thomson and his less long-suffering son. Despite the reforms and the vast improvement of the paper as a thing-on-the-shelf, *The Times* is *still* kept, largely, on the earnings of that real working-girl in a basement in Bouverie Street, *The Sun*. There is indeed no such thing as a free lunch, but that doesn't mean you have to pay for it yourself.

Not to push the metaphor, *The Times* has, with the new underwriting, at least set about making itself more saleable, less élite and remote, no longer an institution but a newspaper. But the improvements—those variably excellent features, the lay-out, the more professional handling of news, the cunning shift to the Right (for marketing rather than ideological reasons)—are not the full occasion for doubled circulation and an improved share of advertising revenue. Rupert Murdoch has made it his business to keep the price of *The Times* artificially low. This was the old strength of the *Telegraph* in its more successful days. An edge in price is a wonderful inducement, and right through the great years of the *Telegraph* and the sipping decadence of *The Times*, a gap of never less than threepence caused the one paper to gain, the other to lose circulation. It comes then as no pleasure for the *Telegraph* now to be undercut, at whatever interim loss elsewhere in the Murdoch empire. This suggests somebody playing to win, and who rationally can object to that?

The rules (and optional rules) for newspaper ownership are clear. Be big. Have other sources of income to pay for the gross costs of Fleet Street. Alternatively, get out of those gross costs, like Eddie Shah of Warrington, by getting the hell out of Greater London. Otherwise do not invest new money. If and when you do invest it, do so in return for a union-free or single-union agreement with all restrictions taken off all technology. Make such dispositions only after organising an alternative system of distribution, free of the broken and frightened men in the main London outlets.

To fall between the rules and the optional rules is not hard. One borrows money for new technology and new premises, obtains agreements with the print unions which depend upon *their* decisions and good faith. In consequence, a newspaper is put out with an earlier deadline; but men learning a new skill, having been sweetly paid to relinquish the old one, cannot even with goodwill produce on a keyboard faster than 14 words a minute, and whole editions are lost to the British Rail timetable. A debt-servicing requirement becomes intolerably high and cannot be met. Money is hard to raise in the City,



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but readily forthcoming from potential takers-over. Much better in the case of such a newspaper to buy quantities of string, keep the old machines and the old employment agreements going. There would be later editions and more newspapers, and no pressing debt. The desperate expedient of a price hike, God's gift to the Opposition, would not be necessary.

Journalists usually have a great affection for their paper, but they have no say in its management—which would be fine if the management were getting things right, but is heart-breaking when even the least expert of us can see the mistakes as easily as he can spot the misprints in his own copy.

I HAVE ATTEMPTED HERE to comment on a situation which is painful without making public anything that is not well known already. Misfortune is a parcel in a Belfast pub, passed round from newspaper to newspaper: "This year us, next year you." The system doesn't work except by the acceptance of heavy loss by those rich enough from real business to be able to bear it. If the Shah experiment works, as I am still inclined to think it will, then the system will work even less well. Mr Shah, having no National Graphical Association, no SOGAT, no NATSOPA, no British Rail timetable, no central London tradition, breaks even at the sort of level one dreams of; accordingly, he is able to slash advertising rates. As he does so, half the foundations of Fleet Street fall from under it and the costs for any colonial Godfather hoping to play press baron go correspondingly up if he buys an established paper. Not even the Buckingham Palace game, the knighthoods and the peerages which have worked their meretricious magic for years on men whom one had thought serious, will suffice any longer. We may just finish up with that most unimaginable of all paradoxes, a free market in newspapers.

Conceivably we shall see a wholesale substitution for Fleet Street: a string of new titles, owned, printed and managed north of Northampton. Quite how the qualities will handle this situation I don't pretend to understand. The temptation to go on playing at being more than a newspaper, more like an institution, has kept them shrouded from the running absurdity of over-manning, union control of work-practice, atrocious production, and the kingdom of the back of the shop for a good 25 years. Half the white knights who came in to reform the show have finished up feeling like curates in Gomorrah. Why expect change?

YET CHANGES DO GET MADE—a fact which brings us back to *The Times*. By taking a loss, by hiring men outside the family vault, Murdoch has pushed that newspaper into something like real circulation. The newspaper proprietors of the future, if they want to sell well to adults, will have much to learn from recent years in Printing House Square. The quality newspapers of five years hence may be printed in Wolverhampton, but to get their optimum circulation, they will want a competitive price. They will also want the breadth of features and reviews which strengthens *The Times*, and they will want a properly plotted target-area of readership. By offending its codger readership, *The Times* moved not so much down-market as down-age-group—an infinitely attractive proposition to advertisers. By flushing out the semi-coagulated blood, *The Times* made itself independent of the heavy spirit of "Better not, old boy. . . ."

These are not, however, the reforms which suggest themselves to anxious proprietors. Knowing as they do that most of the money is lost at the back of the shop, proprietors are still to be found saving pence by holding a bevy of grounded foreign correspondents and calling it a diplomatic desk. Stuck with an ageing readership and an ageing contributorship, little is done to replace the convenient and handy barnacles with the brighter, sharper, more challenging list of contributors which a decisive group of editorial executives could put together in a week.

The dead-march quality of habit is convenient for the producers, deeply inhibiting to potential consumers. No newspaper must let itself be identified as the paper of the very old. Not only is there a good advertising rationale for this, but old age is contagious long before it is inherited. The habit of fitting in with encrusted, fixed, certain habit deftly debilitates all the originality and flair which a newspaper, for commercial reasons and for its own self-respect, should have.

IF A QUALITY PAPER were to stop, start again, live by the rules of low cost out of London and production by satellite, the first thing it would find to hand would be the money to spend on news coverage. There are ever fewer foreign correspondents; there could so easily be many more. If the satellite business really works, then late printing and the carriage of news not available to television the night before becomes thinkable. At the moment, new technology in Fleet Street simply means earlier deadlines, because the old dears cannot cope with a keyboard themselves but would sooner see the whole place go up in fire and damnation than let a sharp secretary or a telex man do the job properly. Since newspapers spend relatively little on editorial and features material, so much upon fixed costs, bleeding costs, and debt, a liberated newspaper could so easily be better.

Magazine qualities would be encouraged, utilising colour but also utilising the great mass of talent not now writing for the press, either because of NUJ rules or because *Fidus Achates* has written the special feature since 1970. Whatever the real needs—news-gathering, features, the best American syndicated columns, or special interests like a children's page—they are none of them truly expensive as a piece of what Fleet Street now spends. With maintenance-men allegedly on £27,000 a year, the pyramid of waste at the production end of Fleet Street has reached the point where only drastic change will do.

Above all, the people who run a newspaper must *want* to run it. There is something desolating about the mechanical devotions and stolid indifference with which the job is done. One of my mad dreams is for a new régime of sub-editors—under less pressure because we would have more of them—

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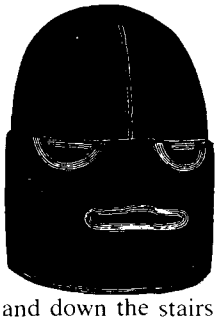
actually thinking about the quality of language which is used. "STAB PC IN TRAFFIC CHAOS", "THATCHER LASHES THUGS", "GLC FURY", "CRAZED FATHER SLAYS EIGHT." That is not merely the language of the comics, it has crept perceptibly into the serious papers. It would be wonderful to have an unhurried headline-writer with a grasp of the apostrophe and the past participle rather than the poor constricted overworked soul who, like an Indian menu confusing "fry" with "fried" mistakes "stab" for "stabbed." Old-fashioned journalists (and old-fashioned printers!) used to have a black horror of misprints and grammatical errors. Today they are strewn like chickweed in an abandoned garden. For those trying to combine new technology with old linotypers, they are a self-seeding disaster, because correction upon those endless little strip-and-stick-on pieces of paper is almost unthinkable. On the satellite screen, military perfection becomes possible.

Indeed, everything is possible in newspapers, but only if a total break is made with the past, with the print unions, with London, and with the managements. For it was they who idly and resentfully submitted to the long decadence which has physically battered the production journalists to despair, creating a product which is ever more burdensome to read between transposed letter and dropped line. It is their failure to cope with labour problems which has long ago constricted journalism into not greatly respecting either the public or itself.

The *Pravda* play got it horribly wrong by treating the British labour problem as a side issue and the London proprietor as a demon king. The particular proprietor whom Howard Brenton and David Hare had in mind is a tough and sensible man, better than the old self-revering *Times* deserved. But when proprietors get it wrong they do so for no conspiratorial or political reason, but because a lifetime of bribing the semi-skilled drives out judgment. Everything is possible. But we have to start again.

# Magic in Islington

## *By Roy Kerridge*



MIDNIGHT IN Islington, and in a Georgian house facing the New River the lights were burning. Files and papers lay scattered around, for this was an advertising agency, and I had difficulty in restraining myself from peeping at documents marked CONFIDENTIAL. My friend Mrs Peterkin from Jamaica was the cleaner here, and I followed her up and down the stairs as she worked. We had the building to ourselves. Goodhumouredly complaining about the mess, she soon finished, as her unemployed son had been in earlier to do the hoovering. Back at her house in a terraced street bought by the council to prevent "gentrification", I had to squeeze against the wall in the doorway. Furniture had been stacked there for nine years, ever since she had moved in. In the room where I was to sleep, on a comfortable divan, boxes of mouldy-looking clothes hemmed me in on every side.

"The house is 'obeahed'", my hostess explained with an apologetic laugh. "Obeah", in Jamaica, is African magic. In this case the nature of the "obeah" was to prevent anyone from unpacking. As a result, Mrs Peterkin lived in some squalor. Thoroughgoing in their hatred of elegance, the council workmen had gutted the building and built the inside anew on a curious plan, with the kitchen upstairs, and a bedroom in the basement where the kitchen used to be. The sink unit had fallen apart on Mrs Peterkin's first day there, and she seemed to blame the council for the "obeah" too.

In the upstairs kitchen I listened to her tales of "back home." She had lived on the slopes of the Blue Mountains, in a scattered village of "frame and board" cabins, where everyone lived from the produce of their land. A wooden church and a school, once very grand but now falling into ruin, stood on a rise overlooking the Peterkins' shack. Nearly everyone there was a cousin to somebody else, and the school, church and land had been given to their forefathers at Emancipation by the former slave-owner, Mrs Peterkin's great-great-grandfather. My hostess's golden-brown hue testified to her part-European descent.

"Back home, when it was time to build a new cabin, we all would get together for a house-raising. All the neighbours would come around, and if there was enough wood, that house could go up in one night", she told me. "Then the person whose house it was would bring out food an' drink, and there'd be dancing and singing. Me father was a carpenter, he know how to build, and he'd get everything ready for the raisings. That's how he made he living, going from one place to another. When he lay dying, he called all us children around. Me sister Myrkle was frightened an' run away, but we fetch her back. Finally we all gathered round the bed, and me noticed there was a lickle dark mouse running around that I never seen before.

'That's the twelfth mouse appearance', me father say. 'The mouse tell me the twelfth time him come, I must die. That mouse is me grandfather, you know. Divide up the land, an' finish that house foundation I started.'

Then me father pass on, an' poor Myrkle wailing! We have to buy rum an' have a 'Nine Night', that's when we sit up with the body nine nights, singing hymns and drinking till the spirit leave the premises. Then me mother set out to get what help she could to finish the foundations. But whatever was put up,

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tear down in the night. We seen footprints, but thought it was a man come there. Finally me mother looking at the damage one day, an' she see an old lady there.

'A spirit a-spoil your house', the old woman is tell my mother. 'Every morning 'e come at first light an' mash the place up. You must go to the chemist, ask for bottles of this medicine, "Let me go" and "Until Christ Come." Place the medicine on the ground and the spirit will become visible. When he's been seen three times, him vanish.'

Me mother never heard of these medicines, but the chemist in town was used to supplying herbal cures of all kinds, and myrrh and frankincense for them what require it. He sold her the 'Let me go' and 'Until Christ Come' an' she put it for the ground there.

Now me had an Uncle Herbert, and him live over in the next settlement. He live at Dalston now. At that time him would work in the sawmill an' get up early-early an' cross over the ridge an' pass our house.

Six in the morning, we heard a screaming! Outside it Uncle Herbert in a fit, him in a state of shock an' can't talk. Quick, me mother boil up a pitch pine and give him the water! So he recover, an' say 'A big monkey! A big black monkey tear the house up an' pass clean through the stone wall there!'

Next morning me an' Myrkle wake up early for some strange reason. We look out o' the window at the foundation, an' there is a big black hairy monkey! Him *huge*, like a gorilla, and him leaping around tearing everything up. Bigger than a man, I tell you! Then him *run* across the path and vanish through the stone wall, and that wall shaking! We could see the stones shaking. When we tell our mother, she say the house-raising can go right ahead now, the spirit been seen three times.

Us children had to beware of spirits of all kind. Up on the hill we would pick mangos. But we always had to leave the trees an' come down before evening because of the Abners. These are the spirits of children what die unbaptised; they would play an' run in that place most every night. Me cousin stayed late one time after mango, she see an Abner an' she nearly die!"

"Oh dear!" I said. Mrs Peterkin grew excited, and twin dots of white light shone from the pupils of her eyes.

"Me tell you, Brer Roy, spirits are everywhere! Near us, back home, there lived a man whose wife die, an' he marry again. But the stepmother was cruel to his lickle girl Marmpone. One day the man see his dead wife on the path all in white.

'You tell your new wife, if she don't stop ill-treating Marmpone I'll take the child away with me', she say. You see, whenever the stepmother needed firewood, she would send Marmpone out to the wood in the middle of the night, although the child frightened. The father went on a journey. In spite of the warning, the stepmother send Marmpone out, an' this time she don't come back. The whole village search the woods all day an' all night. Me own father find Marmpone in the end, deep in the bush, jammed so hard under the roots of a dead tree he had to go fetch his tools and cut her out. Her mouth was full of wood splinters, she don't know how she got there, only she heard her mother calling her in the woods.

In a dream, the mother beg her husband to rescue Marmpone from the stepmother. But again the stepmother send Marmpone out at night, and nobody see poor Marmpone from that day to this. Goodnight, me hope you're comfortable."

As I lay in the "obeahed" room thinking about the fate of unhappy Marmpone, I could hear Mrs Peterkin bustling about the house, singing plaintively as she worked into the small hours.

*Mourn, you sinners, mourn!*
*Mourn, you sinners, mourn!*
*I want to go to Heaven when I die,*
*So mourn, you sinners, mourn!*

After a while she struck up another chorus, *I Got a Robe*: "When I'm dead I'm gonna put on my shoes and walk all over God's Heaven!"

I've heard of stepping into dead men's shoes, but this was ridiculous! I fell asleep, interrupted only by the clattering entrance and hasty withdrawal of Mrs Peterkin's high-heeled daughter Lurline and her boyfriend. Asleep once more, I survived the "obeahed" room, troubled only by a dream that I went out without my plastic bag, the Kerridgean equivalent of nakedness.

Next morning I set out for a Nigerian "Spiritual Church" in one of Islington's loveliest squares, near the derelict Royal Agricultural Hall. Musing on Mrs Peterkin's stories, I remembered how often a character who seemed quite at home in her peasant world would turn out to be now living at Hackney or Lewisham. Even her emotional sister "Myrkle" (Myrtle) now lived in a council flat at King's Cross. No wonder so many old West Indians in London spend their days leaning against traffic barriers in melancholy reverie. How can they cope with city life, used as they are to a countryside steeped in magic and mystery, where dreams are real and reality is a dream?

In London, West African magic often seems more apparent among West Indians than among Africans themselves. A glance at their Press shows that in their homeland, Africans are as magical as ever. Not long ago the *Accra Spectator* printed an article by my Ghanaian counterpart, Andoh-Kesson, under the heading "Witch Confesses to Own Misdeeds."

Before a pagan shrine at Accra, an eighteen-year-old girl confessed that she had cursed her aunt with barrenness as revenge for a beating. Pursued by the fetish priest (or witch-doctor), she had turned into a giant frog and leaped away. However the rival wizard had become a white dove, overtaken her, and brought her to his shrine. He had taken her "witch pot' or magic cauldron, which he found near Accra New Town, so she was powerless and at his mercy. Her fate was not recorded.

At the moment, London is experiencing the largest wave of West African immigration since the early 1950s. Unlike the West African immigrants of thirty years ago, who were obsessed with forming political societies, the newcomers

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are preoccupied with religion and churches. "Spiritual Churches", which blend paganism and Christianity, are opening all over London. The Islington church, which I had visited before, has a Yoruba congregation from Nigeria. I had long admired the building, which had been empty for many years, the colour-supplement intellectuals of the district not caring greatly for God.

Now the Celestial Church had taken over, all was changed. I took off my shoes and entered, to find white figures seated amid clouds of incense. All the pews had been removed, replaced by rows of chairs, and a yellow wall-to-wall carpet laid. Organ music swirled, and the congregation stood to sing Anglican hymns, the men on the right side of the aisle, the women and small children on the left. As I was not wearing a Sutana, or sacred white robe, I had to stand at the back. The women wore chef-style white hats, and a mother carried a baby swaddled to her back, in a cloth marked with a large cross.

After an unexceptional sermon on Faith, the halfway mark seemed to be reached. A drum pattern began to be heard above the organ. With some excitement, the chairs were cleared away. The English half of the service, impressively formal, was now over. Africa returned, and everyone began to dance, jigging around on the spot to an inspiring rhythm, provided by drums of every kind, two sticks beaten together, a guitarist and a trumpeter whose notes sounded like Latin American blues.

As the organ faded away, the drums and sticks grew more and more insistent. After a song in English, "The Satan cannot trouble me, I shall not be moved", the Yoruba language took over. The orchestra bobbed around on their stage in a corner, near the altar where neon-blue crosses shone in a receding vista. A large neon-lit cross, blue and yellow, overshone the rest. First of all a girl group sang shrilly, and then the men joined in. Booming, rolling Yoruba chants rose above the sound of palms on drumskins. I paid eight pence for a white candle and joined the line of men in spotless cassocks who danced towards the altar. Candles or gifts of fruit were offered to "the Celestial God" on trays, and each tray-bearer would be intercepted by others throwing money on the gifts. Smiling women met me as I danced back again, offering hot doughnuts or lumps of sugar which you dipped in honey. Delicious! As the women danced forwards in turn, some groaned, doubled up, and spoke in tongues. A constant yelping of gibbon-sounds could be heard above the drums. We danced in line, men on one side and women on the other, out into the hall, where we prayed to the four corners of the world ("Jehovah! Jesus Christ! Holy St Michael!") and danced into the church again.

Dancing was interspersed by Bible readings, when we all sat on the carpet and made ourselves very comfortable. On a previous visit, a sensitive friend who accompanied me said that she could feel the spirits of the earth, air, sun and water, and knew she was among a peasant people, but could not sense anything Higher.

"We have our own prophets, who go into trances and deliver messages from the saints", I had been told by the tall bespectacled Secretary on that occasion. Now I found that he was right.

As the drums struck up once more, a white-clad woman became possessed and danced towards me, on to the men's side, her face a study in grimness, eyes tightly closed. After dancing round and round me, she turned and began butting me with the back of her head, still keeping perfect rhythm. Then she waltzed off, and another woman rushed up and began beating me quite hard with the blue scarf she wore around her robe. A third woman, kind and jolly-looking with glasses, told me not to worry as everything was all right. Anxiously, the Secretary ran forward.

"The Prophetess has saved you from sudden death!" he gasped. "She saw death hovering over you. After the service, you must do what she says."

As the service continued, my eyes roved around the light, airy building, and I wondered what the 19th-century colonels whose memorials graced the walls, and the artists who had made the stained-glass windows, would have thought of the fervent Yorubas. African pagan worship has for thousands of years relied on possession by gods or ancestors, and Christian-inspired religious fervour is apt to lead back to the old days. As in the Celestial Church, possession can be interpreted with the use of Christian imagery. A missionary to the Luo tribe of Kenya told me that he went to bed one night, leaving his Baptist church drumming merrily away. In the morning he was told that members had been possessed by devils, who were then beaten and cast outside. Sharply, he questioned if they had been *genuine* devils.

"Well, if they weren't devils, they were ancestors", came the sheepish reply.

At the end of the service, the Celestial Church transformed itself into an African market-place. Groups of happily-gossiping men and women sat on the floor around the base of slender white pillars, and children scampered everywhere, the girls in miniature cooks' hats. One wide-eyed toddler solemnly dashed holy water over her forehead whenever she ran jerkily in and out of the door. A deacon kept borrowing pages from my notebook to write out prayers and dream-interpretations, and enchanting children huddled around my feet drawing pictures on the rest of my book. All spoke in Jamaican-Cockney, an accent most West African parents shudder at, where the highest praise is "Real wicked, guy!"

All round the church, individual magic spells were being made. Women lay in trances under sheets, or flat on their backs with unlit candles in their hands or mouths. Other women carried bowls of boiled corn, customary food of the Yoruba gods, for us to sample. Magic wands, waved here and there, were either plain switches or bundles of dried palm fronds. A big man sat dividing out the Celestial God's fruit among the children. Meanwhile, my prophetess was dictating a spell in Yoruba to the jolly woman, who was writing it down in English. To avoid death, I had to take a candle home, light it, and pray to the four corners of the world.

"You will always be lucky if you put on a Sutana, our sacred robe", I was told. I saw no harm in this, but was rather surprised when a stern woman with the three Yoruba vertical scars on her cheek began solemnly to measure me up for one. My friend Ben, a kind-hearted church member, looked on approvingly. I had told him of my Nigerian stepfather. "Was he a Yoruba?" he had asked keenly.

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London's new Africans do not pretend that tribes don't exist, as the secretive anti-colonials of the '50s used to. A more innocent generation, they are not ashamed to tell you at once that their tribe is the best one. Sitting beside me, the Secretary told me the rules of the Church, hinting that in Nigeria animal sacrifices were made. He spoke very good English, which made his remarks seem more surprising.

"Nobody must eat pork, and nobody must wear the colours black or red. Black is the colour of evil. No chewing cola nuts and no associating with wizards or witches. We have a very great secret. Not many people know this, but that corner of the Church is called Mercyland. If you pray over there while three tall white candles burn down, your whole life will be changed in seven days."

I looked, and saw a young man kneeling before the candles, while a priest or wizard chanted and waved a wand over him. Next time I came to the Celestial Church, my Sutana was ready and I put it on. So if you should see the white-clad dancers of Cloudesley Square, look out for the one holding a plastic bag. Now I can sing *I Got a Robe* in earnest.

# Paris Notebook

## *By Jean-François Revel*

## Letter from Brazil

*Rio de Janeiro*

CAN the realities and difficulties of the Third World be summed up by the "three Ds" of Debt, Democracy, and Development? If so, then Brazil is doubtless the most instructive case to consider. First, it is the biggest debtor country in the Third World (at more than 100 billion dollars). Second, it no longer belongs altogether to the Third World—a pseudo-concept which is mostly a device for ideologising problems—since Brazil has combined a powerful economic "take-off" with the underlying affliction of partial underdevelopment. Third, the Brazilians have just restored democratic processes, thereby reinforcing a general trend in this region of the world.

A continent-nation like Brazil, with its 135 million inhabitants, can hardly be expected to display the sort of "harmonious progress" which neither Italy, Spain, nor even France were able to achieve in their time, working against their own frightful regional and social disparities, some of them still unresolved (and possibly, one day, to be corrected). On the other hand there is no denying the breadth of Brazil's sheer development, which is after all the key to social improvements. Reversing the old cliché which predicted that the poor countries would grow continually poorer, between 1941 and 1981 Brazil managed an annual average growth rate of 6.7%; or roughly double the rate achieved by the United States, Europe, or even Japan over so long a period. Its gross national product is the second or third largest in the American hemisphere, less than the United States, more or less equal with Canada (followed by Mexico), and the ninth largest in the world. This turns the old economic hierarchy of Latin America upside-down. In 1950 the top four countries in the table were Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Cuba, with standards of living and even social indicators quite on a par with those of their European contemporaries. Today, Brazil and Mexico head the table. Per capita income quadrupled in Brazil between 1945 and 1980, although population tripled in the same 35-year period.

The country is therefore firmly established in the group known as "the New Industrialised Countries." It is a significant exporter of manufactured products. Two-thirds of its population live in the towns. The state of São Paulo—itself producing the equivalent of the entire GNP of Argentina—boasts one of the most powerful industrial concentrations in the world, particularly in the area of Cubatão (which is also, I am afraid, notorious for its appalling pollution). Brazilian agriculture, although it employs a dwindling fraction of the working population, has made great technical progress; and, apart from its underdeveloped zones, it contains several sectors which are highly productive. For some odd reason they are less well publicised, but they set the country among the major food-producing powers.

In the sphere of culture, despite an illiteracy rate of about one-third, Brazil also has a high rate of university attendance. Some nine hundred newspapers are published. Daily papers such as the *Estado de São Paulo* or the *Jornal do Brasil*, and weeklies such as *Veja* or *Visão*, appear to me to match the very best of their European or American opposite numbers. With its six national television networks (all of them private), as well as dozens of regional stations, Brazil produces the

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only popular film series which seriously rival Great Britain and the United States on the world market. The news programmes shown on the two best networks, *Globo* and especially *Manchete*, each one a full hour long, with never (so far as I noted) the slightest "technical hitch", are equal (and often even superior, in my view) not only to most European newscasting but often to that of the three big North American companies, both in the liveliness of their presentation and in the range of their live international coverage.

I must go on to say that these successes only underline the terrible contrast with the poverty of those whom development does not reach. In the backward regions, incomes are less than one-third of the national average. The prosperous regions have attracted two-thirds of the population, displacing millions of internal migrants; and this brings racking insecurity and an appalling housing crisis. Hence the *favelas*, shanty towns that begin as shacks built of planks and sheet metal, then gradually evolve into districts of modest permanent dwellings. Hence, also, the massive unemployment, fortunately offset by a thriving "black economy." The town of São Paulo, with a current population of nearly 15 million, grows by the influx of some 600,000 newcomers a year, accumulating an urban sub-proletariat without any professional training. The State of São Paulo, with less than one-fifth of the total population of Brazil, concentrates almost half its GNP. Its per capita income is more than twice the national average. How can the poor of the *Nordeste* be prevented from heading that way? One-third—five million!—of São Paulo city's population are already immigrants from the *Nordeste*.

CONTRARY to what is often claimed, the extreme poverty of the *Nordeste* is not the outcome of any lack of aid. Between 1964 and 1984 the various governments of Brazil, including the military, have kept up a constant flood of funding for land development. But even if all this money had reached the peasants, instead of being partly diverted into the pockets of politicians and bureau-

## "SWI": Strategic Words Initiative

THE STUDY *of history teaches no more depressing lesson than Hegel's celebrated quip: "We learn from history that we do not learn from history." What is it in our psyche that makes nations and individuals pursue the same errors as though history were a blank page and every man born into a state of innocence?*

**One answer is our unwillingness to face up to unpalatable facts. We crave the limitations of an uncomplicated existence on which neither the legacy of the past nor the activities of our contemporaries outside our bailiwick are allowed to impinge. Ignorance is, literally, bliss.**

*But the dangers of unknowing are great. Reflect for a moment on the popular fallacy that, stripped of ideology, the Soviet system is like any other. It is a highly popular fallacy because it is soothing to believe it. It makes no demands on our imagination; it requires us to take no action.*

SOONER OR LATER, **however, Western public opinion will have to come to grips with the unpalatable fact that the true source of our running conflict with the Soviet Union is not the wickedness of Soviet leaders, nor the outsize ambitions of Soviet generals, nor the habitual Russian obsession with security, nor even the legacy of Russian imperial expansionism (although they all play a part) but the character of the Soviet system itself. Soviet society is intolerant, aggressive and expansionist, not because individual men and women make it so but because that is its** raison d'être **and sole claim to legitimacy.**

**So long as we can persuade ourselves that the Soviet challenge does not flow organically from the character of the Soviet system, we can, we think, deal with it in the way we have learned to deal with any other power—by forging alliances, building up our military potential, flexing our economic muscle and deploying our skills of diplomacy and persuasion.**

OUR PROBLEM IS *that the Soviet Union is no ordinary power any more than Karl Marx was an ordinary economist. The Soviet Union is both a cause and a country. It is* (pace *Stalin) international in form but national in content. Academics like Robert C. Tucker have called it "Russian National Bolshevism", a variant of national-socialism with its face turned toward the international community and its propaganda suffused with the language of international revolution.*

THE WESTERN **liberal democracies have no experience in dealing with a country of that kind. Their instinct is to belittle or indeed to ignore the ideological component in Soviet behaviour, ascribing it to the peculiarities of Russian political culture and the legacy of Byzantium. They are oblivious of the fact that Marxist-Leninist ideology is Moscow's passport and badge of legitimacy in the eyes of people who would otherwise have no difficulty recognising behind the Soviet façade the familiar face of Czarist imperialism.**

*It is even more difficult for us to come to terms with the fact that the Soviet message—which has, by now, few takers either in Western Europe or the U.S.—still falls on receptive ears in the Third World. The idea that history has some "Grand Design" rich with the promise of the complete emancipation of man satisfies a deeply felt Utopian need, especially in countries that have lost their traditional spiritual bearings and are in search of new ones. That the Soviet Union claims to be both midwife to the birth of that "Grand Design" and its custodian once it has forced its way into power*

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*Among Urban's books are "Eurocommunism", "Détente", and "Stalinism." His most recent contribution to* ENCOUNTER *was his interview with Max Kampelman, "Can We Negotiate with the Russians? (and if so, how?)" (February and March 1985).*

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crats, it would not have been enough: the aridity of the *Nordeste* seems to be incurable.

To quote a notorious Third Worldist slogan, is it true that the people of this disadvantaged province are "victims of the capitalism of the Multinationals"? When I put this question to the President of the Republic, José Sarney, he replied that the idea must surely be some kind of "ideological joke." Unhappily, there is not a penny of foreign investment in the *Nordeste*, and the region does not possess the wherewithal to supply any export market. With its enormous state subsidies, it instead displays all the characteristics of pre-capitalist structures.

How is Brazil to tackle this explosive mixture of simultaneous economic take-off and underdevelopment? And one must bear in mind that, according to the latest demographic projections, its population will have reached 250 million by 2020. The first solution would be the classic Latin American policy of no solution, *fuite en avant*, which is to say a headlong flight forward, into irresponsibility, demagogy and xenophobia. The second would be the growth of a genuine democratic civilisation, accompanied by a sense of economic reality and a critical approach to all social progress.

One criterion of the choice to be made by Brazil will be found in its attitude towards the problem of foreign debts—a criterion which also applies to the whole of Latin America. For the "Third-World balance-of-payments crisis" that we hear so much about is principally a matter of Latin American debts, in other words a problem of countries which are more than "half-developed." Of the nine biggest debtor nations in the world, six are Latin American; and they are led by Brazil, with a per capita income ten times as great as India's!

THE CLOUD-CUCKOO LAND APPROACH would be to fail to point out to the nation as a whole that its debts represented money already borrowed and spent, and to depict them instead as a kind of ransom extorted by the wealthy. In this soap-opera scenario, the role of villain is played by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is presented as a

## By George Urban

*lends it a quality of the sacred and the inevitable. Its crimes are seen to be "sins of felicity" on the road to universal salvation. Its Berias and Stalins are erring popes who cannot corrupt the pure fountain of faith.*

IT IS THIS **millenarian creed riding on the back of Russian imperial power that Western public opinion cannot quite comprehend and our political class does not know how to counter. Will they, under the impact of Soviet expansionism, prove themselves capable of making the intellectual and imaginative effort to comprehend it, suspecting as they must that the truth would bring them up sharply against the fact that no real peace can be had in the world as long as the Soviet system is what it is?**

*Judging by the pronouncements of the "talk-up-Gorbachev" lobby, it seems that we are unprepared to do so. Denis Healey, once a leading critic of Soviet despotism and now shadow foreign secretary of the British Labour Party, assures us in "Newsweek" that*

> *"Gorbachev represents a complete break with the earlier generation [of Soviet leaders]. . . . Emotions flicker on a face of unusual sensitivity like summer breezes on a pond. In discussion he was fierce but flexile with a composure full of inner strength. . . . It was typical that he risked the displeasure of the fuddy-duddies in Moscow not just by bringing his stylish wife with him but by allowing her to choose her own programme."*

*Is Mr Healey aware of Western portrayals of the "benevolent Stalin" fervently espoused by the "talk-up-Stalin" industry in the 1930s?*

> **"His brown eye is exceedingly kind and gentle. . . . A child would like to sit in his lap and a dog would sidle up to him."**

**So U.S. Ambassador Joseph E. Davies wrote of the despot in *Mission to Moscow*. And H. G. Wells opined after a visit to the Kremlin:**

> **"I have never met a man more candid, fair and honest, and to these qualities it is, and to nothing occult or sinister, that he owes his tremendous undisputed ascendancy in Russia. . . . No one is afraid of him and everybody trusts him."**

THESE IMAGES OF *the Soviet leaders are dangerous, not because they are necessarily untrue as impressions gained by benign observers, but because they distort the whole character of Soviet history, putting the emphasis where it does not belong. That "fair and honest" Stalin was dispatching hundreds of thousands to the Gulags at the time of Messrs Davies's and Wells's interviews with him.*

PERHAPS **Mikhail Gorbachev is different, but the onus of proof is not on him but the Soviet system. And that has institutionally not changed since Stalin. The truths about Soviet society are not easy to comprehend or to live with. They require intelligence, perseverence, a knowledge of the past and, above all, courage—courage of the sort we have almost forgotten how to muster.**

**It takes intelligence and courage to tell the Third World (and the First and the Second, for that matter) that the "Grand Design" the Soviet Union stands for is fraudulent; that Soviet power is no midwife to some beneficial process; that human emancipation cannot be attained by revolution; that institutions of the Soviet type are not instruments of the liberation and prosperity of man but the supreme symbols of his enslavement and impoverishment.**

SPACE DEFENSE *is a necessary but insufficient condition of Western security. Having proclaimed SDI, the "Strategic Defense Initiative", President Reagan should now proceed to proclaim a "Strategic Words" Initiative to concentrate our minds on the urgent need to deploy symbols and ideas in our engagement with the Soviet system.*

**The strategic imbalance in words is much more dangerous to the future of our liberties than any imbalance in nuclear weapons.**

*George Urban*

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cynical slave-trader. For many seem to be unaware that the IMF does not set foot where it is not invited. It is the doctor summoned to the bedside of countries suffering from financial breakdown, and it lends them the curative cash on condition that they follow a given diet. In general, governments are ready enough to take the money, but balk at the diet. After all, the cure implies an admission of severe mismanagement; and what politicians would not prefer to blame their mistakes on "foreigners"?

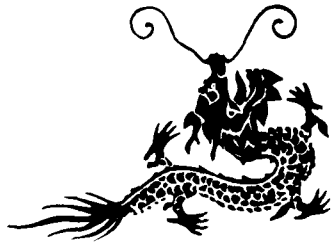
That is what Fidel Castro is about when he tries to rally the Latin American leaders to his latest cause!—declarations of insolvency. The possible cost of such a move to the lenders (who are mainly banks) is around 400 million dollars, which for the industrialised countries would mean deepening economic crisis and unemployment, and mass bankruptcies. The consequence would be to halt investment in Latin America, and therefore to halt its exports; since its creditors, who are also its best customers, would obviously refuse to pay. Hence recession and disruption throughout the Western economy. I can readily see how much it would advantage the Soviets to push their "Castro pawn" and plunge the whole continent into chaos. It is harder to understand the naivety of the Latin American figures who turned up in Havana last summer to take part in a "conference" on the problem of debt. I find something quite comical in the sight of the Cuban dictator not only poking his nose into other people's business, but giving them advice on subjects like economics and technology, in which his own national achievements are so resoundingly well known.

The other approach would be for Brazil to carry out a full-scale rehabilitation of its economy, starting by settling the internal debt (about which it keeps bashfully silent, although it is as large as the external debt). Servicing the interest on both these debts makes a monstrous hole in the national income every year. The task is not an insurmountable one for an economy as vigorous as Brazil's, which has the asset—rare in Latin America—of a trade balance which is regularly and comfortably favourable. But in order to regain its health, the economy must continue to develop; and here it is half strangled by the shackles of excessive state control.

In twenty years, the military dictators nationalised half the economy directly, and two-thirds of it indirectly. As usual, state management has involved some ruinous blunders—thus 30 billion dollars (nearly one-third of the external debt) have been devoted to the construction of nuclear power stations which produce only 3% of the nation's energy, and which Brazil did not need, because its own oil actually supplies 60% of its consumption and because its hydroelectric resources are unlimited. Furthermore the *Estatais*, the national companies, are—not surprisingly—havens for incompetence, political clientism, and corruption. Lastly, the private sector has grown so thin that it is hard to see where an investor might place the capital for which the government calls so loudly.

I listened to President Sarney, in his first televised address to the nation in July, insisting on the need to revive the private sector. This trend, which the President has rightly put forward as a condition of political liberty, implies a plan for denationalisation. The implication has been taken up, for a "Minister of Denationalisation" has been appointed in the new government. What weapon can this poor man wield, to conquer the predictable resistance of corporatist interests and the gigantic state bureaucracy? The only weapon which has sometimes broken privileges without destroying freedom is democracy itself. Provided that it is, with rare sobriety, used without hypothetical exaggerations and demagogic trickery.

# Mysteries of Tibet



THERE ARE two mysteries of Tibet: that of its unique and ancient civilisation, almost unknown to Westerners until the beginning of the 20th century; and that of its fate under 35 years of Chinese occupation. Mme Claude Levenson unravels both of these enigmas in the classic guise of the "traveller's tale"—an old form but always renewable by talent (as it is here).[1] Although she is both an Orientalist and a journalist, it was as an ordinary tourist, one among many, that she made her recent visit to Tibet, since both of her professional "hats" are unpopular with the Chinese authorities.

Peking has lately begun to tolerate a trickle of organised, scrutinised, chaperoned tourism to "the roof of the world." Typical among these visitors are little bunches of septuagenarian Scandinavians with accommodating attitudes. They do not inquire too closely into the hundreds of monasteries razed by the Red Guards during the "Cultural Revolution", the frescoes effaced, the libraries burned. But the visitor has only to stray a step or two away from the beaten track of the official itinerary to discover the ruins of the art, the architecture, and the literature of Tibet fallen under the impact of Mao.

Straying is what Claude Levenson kept managing to do, as she shook off Chinese surveillance with the collusion of the local population. Although concerned primarily with the traditional culture and society of Tibet, which she discusses with intuitive expertise, she was all the more likely to stumble across the widespread traces of the efforts made since 1950 to eradicate the one and to break the other.

In 1950 then, in an operation of "peaceful liberation", the Chinese army invaded Tibet to defend it against "imperialism." To consummate this act of protection, Mao at once annexed half the country's territory and dubbed the other half an "autonomous region." This autonomy seems not to have been apparent to the Tibetans themselves, who rose in rebellion in 1959. That year's repression killed some 87,000 people, according to Chinese assessments made before Mao's death. A massive exodus took place in the direction of

[1] *Le chemin de Lhassa*. By CLAUDE B. LEVENSON. Lieu Commun.

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India and Nepal, and the refugees included the Dalai Lama, who took with him the sole legitimacy still recognised by Tibetans. During the following decade Tibet suffered what was unquestionably the worst ordeal in its history under the onslaught of the Red Guards, who murdered, tortured and shattered whomever and whatever they met. Claude Levenson estimates the number of victims of repression and famine combined at the unimaginable figure of one million dead in 30 years (a death toll which has a Cambodian ring to it), in a population which never exceeded two million.

THE MOST STUPEFYING feature of these tribulations is that they should have passed unnoticed. The world had to wait until 1980, with the onset of a process of very relative "liberalisation", before a few refugees, allowed to investigate whether their families still existed, brought out the first stories of the Maoist terror. But even before then, and despite the efficiency of the Chinese censorship, the will to ignore was more decisive than the difficulty of finding out. In 1959 and 1960 an international Commission of Jurists in Geneva published two very explicit reports about Tibet. They caused little stir. In the mid-1960s Maoist China was too much in fashion for anyone to dare to criticise its bloody colonisation of Tibet, or even to ask simple questions about it.

Now, with the usual delay, the time has come for the West to indulge in its favourite pastime, in this as in so many other areas past and still to come: the practice of confident hindsight, being wise and knowledgeable after the event.

*J.-F.R.*

# Yvoire

Midnight, now, and not a soul
on terrace, seat or lawn;
the empty promenade is paved
by geometries of shadow, all's still,
the atmosphere like vacuum—
save where
a cowl of motionless and swarthy pines
steep-hems the harbour, close,
and the port's eye, restless, glitters.
How muscular and coal-glaze waves
in its rock-dark cockpit swell,
each bulge and buckle, seesaw tilt and hump,
by star-reflections ridden—
slippery, spilt mercury!
How exhaustlessly, with glob and plock,
the water, nervy, slaps
the rib and keel
of twenty tethered yachts,
white-hulled, compact as shells
and as perfect in their shapes,
in line, there, at the groyne.
How brittle, tense and taut
like highly-strung and
tight-reined colts they strain!

And what an eerie dance of sound
the halyards and the rigging make
on high spar and on creaking mast,
with tap-tap fret and horse's bridle clink!
Paths and grass are hushed, all's absence there,
yet how the white yachts bob and toss
as in a weird infectious chafe of desire,
charging the midnight dark
with electricity of expectation.

*Simon Curtis*

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*A Special Book Section*

# Literature & Criticism

## Derision's Master

### *On Alexander Pope—By* CHRISTOPHER RICKS

A BIOGRAPHY of Pope is under the aegis of two of his crystalline utterances. One is professional, though more than that, since of what brave citizen would it not be true? "The life of a Wit is a warfare upon earth." The other is personal, though more than that, since what body-bound mortal does not call upon friendship to ease pain? "To help me thro' this long Disease, my Life." Pope fought against every disability, the physical disability of the curved spine, the civil disability of the laws to curb Catholics. Calumniated for his body and for his spirit, he gave a great deal better than as good as he got. If as a wit he was obliged to wage war, there in a Mammonist world of Sir Robert Walpole's making, he was in his fierce way a man of peace. No one ever had such great friends, Swift and Arbuthnot, Gay and Bolingbroke. He wrote to Swift:

> "Death has not used me worse in separating from me for ever, poor Gay, Arbuthnot, &c, than Disease and Distance in separating You so many years. But nothing shall make me forget you, and I am persuaded you will as little forget me; & most things in this world one may afford to forget, if we remember, & are remembered by, our Friends."

It is one of the many strengths of Maynard Mack's four-square life of Pope that it so likes Pope's fervid likings as well as thrilling to his fiery repudiations. *Alexander Pope: A Life*[1] is a worthy climax to Maynard Mack, a life. For Professor Mack has devoted most of his life to the illumination of Pope's work, from great feats of editing and of manuscript study, to an elaboratedly delicate account of Pope's house and of what it both exemplified and made possible, along with a wealth of historical and literary historical appreciations as well as the most succinct critical displaying of the resources of "wit and poetry and Pope." Yet if this new biography is a consummation of a lifelong Pope scholar, it is as good as it is because it carries too a reminder that there can be no rounded understanding of greatness which narrows itself as greatness by definition does not. For Professor Mack is much more than a Popean, and the gains of this in the very moments of his concentrating upon Pope are clear from his fascinating, stringent account of Pope as editor of Shakespeare. It is because Mack has an independent critical power as a critic of Shakespeare that he is able to write with such crucial authority about Pope's insight into and blindness to the Shakespearean genius.

Such small quarrels as one might have with the tone of Mack's biography would turn upon its flickers of quarrelsomeness, when it momentarily mislays the magnanimity which it both teaches from and learns from the best of Pope, and embroils itself in the stale squabbles of today, so much more dated than those of Pope's day. Such asides are side-swipes, "(thus foreshadowing a habit of mind fashionable in some quarters in the 1980s)." It must be very vexing to know that these hindquarters are ensconced in your own building there at Yale, but the best (probably the only) effective retort to those whose theories lead them to disparage authors and lives of authors is not a theory, and even less an objurgation, but an unignorable humane instance. Mack's biography exemplifies and inculcates a respect for the traditions of literary scholarship; it fails to persuade only when it is moved to that unpersuasive thing exasperation.

For the most part it has a high equanimity, and there is something very touching (both as to Pope and as to its own enterprise) in a final reward which it reaps: the first telling of the story of the love of "Amica" (still unidentified) for Pope, with her poignant letters. Often in the literary world there is nothing more noisy than quiet pride, but it is with a genuinely quiet pride—in her, in the unnamed "private collector" who has generously made these letters available, and in himself—that Professor Mack brings to a conclusion this very late episode in his *Life* and in Pope's life:

> "'I will be at Twickenham to morrow if I hear you are better by the Bearer; and will Sir bring each one of Yours, that I have been favour'd with, that you may be assur'd, in Case of your Removal, I will not boast of that Friendship, which you so prudently, in regard to my Character, have conceal'd. I can say no more but that I am with just

[1] *Alexander Pope: A Life*. By MAYNARD MACK. Yale University Press, £15.95; W. W. Norton (publication 1986), $22.50.



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Esteem, Most valuable Man, Affectionately Yours.'

She kept her word. Her encounters with Pope and what she felt for him are here made public for the first time."

After which there remain only the ten pages of the final chapter, "Death." To close this living monument of a biography is to be more than usually conscious of the truth upon which Swift insisted when he set such store by that simplicity "without which no human performance can arrive to any great perfection." Mack's book is easy to read; in the intricacy of its substantiations it cannot have been easy to write but it is manifestly and in the best sense simple.

ONE OF ITS BIOGRAPHICAL TRIUMPHS is its so making good its sense of Pope's goodness. Aware that he will be accused of "special pleading" whenever he refuses in doubtful cases to prefer, grimly and zestfully, the interpretation which would ensure dislike of Pope, Mack is convincing exactly to the considerable degree in which he brings out that Pope's goodness is continuous with the ability of others to be similarly good. Pope's friendship with the atheist Garth and with the Anglican Trumbull is a witness to their all three possessing a catholic nature: "Pope can hardly have failed to be impressed, as his acquaintance broadened, by the uniformity of decent and even virtuous behaviour that seemed to emerge from systems of belief and unbelief popularly held to be radically opposed and to be productive of totally different sorts of moral conduct."

Mack's own breadth here is responsible for an appreciation not only of Pope the man and of the men whose love he had, but also of Pope the poet, since—as William Empson maintained—it is one of the chief functions of imaginative literature to grant us sympathetic access to systems of belief which are not our own. It is something of a surprise, though a wholly just one, to have one's attention drawn to the *conciliatory* impulse in Pope, given that he is a master of derision; but he is derision's master and not its slave because in poem after poem he conveys that he would honestly prefer a world, a society at least, in which there was less to incite and invite derision. The unity of Pope's day-mind and night-mind, of the *Essay on Man* and *The Dunciad*, is finely captured here, and it is a unity which is alive in the life of friendship as in the life of art. *Windsor-Forest*, like the *Essay on Criticism*, is seen to be ecumenical and conciliatory—"in celebrating the Peace, the poem is also peace making."

Such readings, more generous *because* more discriminating, are sustained by the parallels with friendship's peaceableness; it is always a good sign that Mack has got it right when the attribution of generosity to Pope is possible only because at the same time generosity is attributed to another. Of Pope's hostility to Walpole as against Fortescue's support of Walpole: "It speaks well for both men that they could maintain a friendship in such potentially explosive circumstances." Joseph Spence's integrity in voicing substantial and exact strictures on Pope's *Odyssey* has its counterpart in Pope's response: "Not only did Pope take censures of this kind without a quibble: he sought out their young author and made him a lifelong confidant and friend."

Such social virtues are themselves literary virtues; truly conceived, there was no strain between the two objectives of the Brothers Club, founded by "the improvement of friendship, and the encouragement of letters." Indeed Pope's adversaries were on occasion no less able to manifest this. Theobald was unjust to Pope, but it was later simply decent of him not to shiver Pope's relations with Warburton; the young Warburton

> "had defended Theobald by attacking Pope with an abusiveness and, indeed, an obscenity hardly to be matched elsewhere in hostile Popeana. (It is considerably to Theobald's credit that he allowed no word of this to escape him, at least none that reached Pope.)"

It is such moments in Mack which make the story so heartening, just as it is the complementary power—that of salutarily bringing home how mean-minded our expectations have habitually become—which explains the force of such a simple grounded summary as this:

> "If no other poetry in English contains so many sharp and unforgettable censures, it is equally true that no other poetry so swarms with glowing and affectionate tributes to friends: tributes that the essayist Charles Lamb would read aloud in the next age with tears and, throwing down the book, exclaim, 'Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?'"

It is surprising, and discreditable, that we have got in the way of finding such a thing surprising. For what are the censures worth that are voiced by those who never happily pay tributes?

MACK EFFECTS A RELATED UNITY, or (better) effects our seeing it, in the matter of Pope's innuendos and obliquenesses. He writes very well about the moral and artistic case for satirical innuendo, where more is in question than a sly bolt-hole. In a world of punitive censorship, Pope turned to advantage the very thing which would otherwise be a satirist's disadvantage: that he cannot speak out. By innuendo, he made it necessary for the great enemies (the Court and Walpole) either to suffer ignominiously or ignominiously to brand themselves. If the cap fits. . . . And there has never been such a maddening hatter. Mack has many beautifully various instances of Pope's resourcefulness here, including the way in which he put his friends up to penetrate his sometime friends, as when Lord Peterborow wrote on Pope's behalf to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, smarting as "furious Sappho":

> "For as Lord Peterborow reminded her with infuriating exactness (in a letter possibly phrased by Pope) when she called on him as intermediary to inquire into Pope's intentions, there were and had been many English 'Sapphos':
>
> > 'He said to me what I had taken the Liberty to say to you, that he wondered how the Town could apply those Lines to any but some noted common woeman, that he

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should be yet more surprised if you should take them to your Self. . . .'"

Mack is very good at teasing out these calculated impasses. But what is also fresh is his relating these skilled aggressions to their affectionate counterpart in Pope, by which the same arts of insinuation are used, but to lovingly benign purposes, in the poems of love and friendship. It is Mack's understanding of such habits of mind which allows us to see a poem like "To a Young Lady, with the Works of Voiture" as sidelong without deviousness, and bantering without prurience; and it is the biographical context, of Mack's humane sense of Pope's humanity, which shows how positive such an art of insinuation can be—so positive that insinuation is not the word. One of Mack's supreme instances is the single-minded acknowledged duplicity of Pope's great reply to Swift's modest proposal that Pope should think of the prudence of becoming a Protestant; Pope returns the dearest mockery, and Mack sums up the honest double-dealing: "The letter goes on, witty to the end, permitting Swift to smile at his invitation to apostatize if it were seriously meant and to laugh at it if it were not: a delightful demonstration of affectionate tact."

IN ONLY ONE RESPECT does Mack's own affectionate tact seem to me an obstacle, and this is of course when tact is asked to deal with something to which it is not appropriate. Another way of putting this would be to say there is one respect in which the traditions within which Mack is working (he works best so, when in sympathy with the traditions, and when he wins his way, it is, like Pope, by yielding to the good old tide) are themselves unsatisfactory, inimical to coherence of attention and inimical to a fully responsible sense of Pope's elected responsibilities. The nub here, one that is naturally returned to throughout the book, is the relation of Pope's poetry to historical fact.

The traditional unsatisfactory placating way of dealing with this is twofold: on the one hand, to express delight at Pope's art when it is perfectly consonant with historical fact, and indeed quite rightly to delight in it *because* it arises from and is consonant with fact, because it so magnificently turns the given to imaginative advantage; while on the other hand asseverating, when Pope violates the historical facts, that of course we are in the presence of poetry not of history, and that what matters is a poet's mythopoeic powers, not his (pause for a cold rebuking frown bent upon those who misunderstand these aesthetic matters) *accuracy*.

Now this is a cheat; it not only condones cheating but practises it. It does damage not only to the shifty arguers for Pope, but also to Pope, because it necessarily shifts attention away from his consummate artistic achievement as *the* genius of the *trouvaille* and of contemporary fact. If on occasion Pope would have to be found guilty of working in a softer, less responsible, medium than he normally mastered (of plasticining the facts so that they become those amenable, less valuable, things "facts"), this would be a small price to pay for the untrammelled clarification of his usually having so amazing an inerrancy and so extraordinary an ability to discover rather than to invent. Pope doesn't just see the truth, he sees the truth there in things that are not of his making—a name that he emphatically does *not* make up, a fact that he did not spin, a playing by his enemies into his hands and into those of the living God.

It is not kindness to his greatest art to be kind to the moments when he did not align it truly, the moments when he took short-cuts or snatched a grace beyond the reach of that truthfulness which was the ground of his great art.

> *That not in Fancy's Maze he wander'd long,*
> *But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song.*

It is Pope's genius suddenly to see (*not* to imagine) that Lord Hervey lacks teeth, and then not only to write:

> *So well-bred Spaniels civilly delight*
> *In mumbling of the Game they dare not bite.*

—but immediately to follow with the hideous fidelity of this:

> *Eternal Smiles his Emptiness betray,*

—a line which would be vacant, a mere moralism, if it were not for the physiological fact, the dental detail, which fills it.

All of which means that it will not do, as Mack often does, to make excuses—with high talk about myth and the imagination—whenever Pope fails to live up to the exacting standards of his own kind of art and its severe responsibilities. No one has written better than Mack about these responsibilities, in praise of a poet "whose major works would regularly consist in investing realities of fact—a forest, a lock of hair, bad writers, the England of Robert Walpole, Twickenham, and himself—with some of the characteristics of myth." Or again, on London: "it had also for some decades, in fact as well as myth . . .": such is the conjunction which it was this poet's greatness to seize and which it is the critic's responsibility to hold on to. "Chaste Matrons praise her, and grave Bishops bless": this "referred not simply to courtly bootlicking in general but to a particular reception that had taken place at St James's early that spring."

> *Slander or Poyson, dread from Delia's Rage,*
> *Hard words or Hanging, if your Judge be [Page].*

Page "*was* in fact something of a judicial sadist"—and this is not an extra-literary fact, but the ground for Pope's art of discovery, of uncovering, an art which does not imagine things into existence, but exercises its imagination upon the existent, with a sense that imagination's responsibilities are proportionate to truth's claims.

It is a creative act of criticism by Mack which adduces a physical fact such as gives further body to Pope's lines in praise of Mrs Howard, in a healing counterpart to the cutting use of Lord Hervey's physical decay:

> *"Has she no Faults then (Envy says) Sir?"*
> *Yes she has one, I must aver:*
> *When all the World conspires to praise her,*
> *The Woman's deaf, and does not hear.*

Mack introduces these lines with a decorum that answers to

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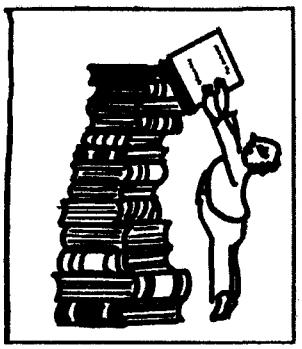
Pope's own audacious act of affection, by saying levelly of Mrs Howard that she was "in fact somewhat deaf." This is a true praise of all concerned, of their touching trust that nothing wounding is meant. But we are confronted elsewhere with the wrong sort of conspiring to praise, when it is pretended that such fidelity to fact at the heart of imagination is compatible, except at the level of Public Relations, with the repeated insistence, as we get near a bit of Pope where he bends the facts, that "poetry is never history." Whenever Mack (somewhat against the grain of his personal convictions, I'd have thought, and with one of his few concessions to the times) urges us to be hospitable to "modifications of historical reality" because it is a good thing "to acknowledge fictionality" and to "reaffirm the fictionality of fictions", we should all—including Pope—beware of pickpockets.

# Gods & Lovers

## *Burgess, Lawrence & Ancient Rome—By* ROGER LEWIS



HISTORY, the nightmare Stephen Dedalus was trying to awaken from, is currently Anthony Burgess's demesne; he is content to slumber in its embrace, and Catullus's phrase *una nox dormienda* (the one long final night of death) runs through *The Kingdom of the Wicked*[1] as a refrain. History is *currently* Burgess's inspiration, too, because he talks of himself, in Mediterranean and Alpine exile, as being cut loose from the current of modern British life. The reality of his homeland is dead to him. Exile is a post-mortem state; when making ghostly visitations to publicise a book he has said he feels foolish "trying to work out how much the types of coins are worth. . . . It's the currency you see, the daily currency of life. . . ." A chronological elsewhere is the only territory he can lay claim to. He is an exile in both time and space.

Already Burgess's early novels have a period flavour. Enderby, the menopausal picaro, capers through a country of Beatles and Beat poets, of nylon chic and Union Jacks, of Morris Minors, Jags, and lately demobbed war-veterans. When he was resurrected in 1984 (*Enderby's Dark Lady*), Enderby (a town, incidentally, near Leicester) was to be located, if the book's vernacular was any clue, somewhere in the Indiana of the 1970s: a place of sun-goggled hipsters, flared breeches and long Caroline locks. Uneasy about the dated modernity, Burgess shifted the bulk of the novel into a remote past (Enderby living the life of Shakespeare) and a remote future (Enderby the author of a sci-fi nonsense about time-travel).

When I met him recently, Burgess was toiling on an opus about King Arthur—provisionally called *The Sovereignty of the Sword*, it is set in medieval Wales and 1960s Leningrad. *The Guardian* has reported that Burgess is in the midst of a big book about Manchester in the 1930s. That so prodigal a man can be tapping out two epics simultaneously there is no doubt (he bought a word-processor a few months ago to hurry production), but the interesting point is that again he's recollecting and fabricating history—as of course Joyce did by looking at a June day a decade after it had elapsed.

But historical romance, which is what Burgess confects, does not, as Joyce's work does, penetrate into the minds of characters to listen to their thoughts. Historical romance is costume drama in prose, a novelistic wax-museum. In the V & A clothes section, and at Madame Tussaud's, the curators labour to get details right. So does Burgess. *The Kingdom of the Wicked* is a product of research. An appendix testily informs us of beetle-browed hours spent with the Graeco-Latin edition of the New Testament, with *Die Romfahrt des Apostels Paulus und die Seefahrtskunde in romishen Kaiseralter* by H. Balmer . . . and so on. The back door of the Monaco atelier saw more book-laden carts than George Eliot's house when she drudged at *Romola*.

Fearful that the Doctor-of-Divinity affectations will impede the sale of the novel to the multitude, Burgess pretends to peddle the text through a diseased shipping-clerk called Sadoc: "The opinions, interpretations, errors . . . of the supposed author . . . are not always mine." Sadoc benignly muddles. We are to credit that this chronicle is hidden behind more layers of reticence than Henry James, more occult paper-puzzles than Borges ("the Argentine Burgess"). Sadoc writes in demotic Greek which Burgess has pretended to translate. Secondly, speech is reported in dialects and languages we don't actually hear—for example, "You seem to have difficulty with our Aramaic. Would you prefer that I spoke in Latin?"—and yet we read only Burgess's English. The headmasterly author's note alone informs that Tacitus, Suetonius, Josephus and the Acts of the Apostles were consulted "in the original tongues."

Burgess wants us to applaud his learning ("Plaudite! Plaudite!" shouts his Nero) while appreciating a ripping yarn. The contrary tugs between highbrow and lowbrow mark all his books. Toomey, in *Earthly Powers*, writes best-sellers

[1] *The Kingdom of the Wicked*. By ANTHONY BURGESS. Hutchinson, £9.95.

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but can't quite manage art; Enderby dreams of art but a succession of brides drags him into the market-place; Robert Loo, in *The Long Day Wanes*, is a composer of genius but dissipates his talent by writing pastiche movie-scores.

BURGESS'S TWO LITERARY HEROES miraculously survived the extremes. Shakespeare made money and wrote masterpieces (*Nothing Like the Sun*); Joyce wrote masterpieces, worked hard, survived on charity (*Here Comes Everybody* and *Joysprick*). The duopoly now becomes a triumvirate: D. H. Lawrence is Burgess's latest wish-fulfilling self-image.

*Flame Into Being* [2] is a centennial celebration. Lawrence, like many of the Modernists, is as remote in terms of the calendar as the Victorian age: 1885 was the year of *The Mikado*. The real subject of *Flame Into Being*, however, is not the celebrated but the celebrant. The title of the first chapter comes clean: "Lawrence and Myself When Young." Burgess and his literary playmate were both from working-class families and northern industrial cities (Manchester and Nottingham); both were, as infants, branded as *mardarse*, meaning sensitive and bookish and mollycoddled; both went to provincial universities (Burgess never stops saying that Oxford and Cambridge graduates still snub him), and "William Shakespeare was another Midlander who did not go to Oxford"; both married foreign aristocrats (Frieda von Richthofen and Liliana Macellari); both elected to live abroad (Lawrence just about everywhere, searching, amongst other goals, for a climate hospitable to his lungs; Burgess in Malaya and Brunei, Malta, Rome, Monaco, Switzerland, "trying to get out of the narrow cage which inhibits the English novel, to avoid writing about failed love affairs in Hampstead"); both believed themselves persecuted by a British boorishness and scorn for imaginative pursuits (Lawrence had trouble with the censor long before Lady Chatterley; Burgess was sued for libel by a schoolmaster who recognised himself in *The Worm and the Ring*; there was a prudish fuss over *A Clockwork Orange*; the critics, he complains, vex him to this day). All in all, "literature is essentially subversive, and Lawrence is a witness (or martyr, which means the same thing) for that truth."

Subversive, perhaps, because it up-ends preconceptions; it makes it new, to use Ezra Pound's phrase; it locates bliss in the commonplace, to use Thomas Mann's phrase. Subversive, perhaps, because it *doesn't* promote moral good—which is the lesson of *A Clockwork Orange*. Alex loves Beethoven: after listening to the music he goes out on the rampage. Lawrence was a witness to sexuality; his subject, the mythical and ritualistic; his world, the dangerous forests of the mind ("the divine unconscious"). Burgess interprets him as a theological Freud, a psychoanalytic Blake: "Lawrence's entire output adds up to a unity to be read rather as one reads the Bible. . . . Like all Britain's prophets, he preached to a wilderness."

The Bible Burgess has himself lately finished rewriting. *Moses* (a poem) and the novel *Man of Nazareth* were published a few years ago. *The Kingdom of the Wicked* is the third and final portion. The main character is Saul of Tarsus who, as Paul, as self exile more arraigned than praised, travels endlessly and spouts the Nazarene message. Around the apostle orbits a profusion and confusion of small figures with big names, and an interleaved chronicle about Imperial depravities. Rome is the kingdom of the wicked; it will become the kingdom of God: Mother Empire and Mother Church. "A Mother . . . hiding behind the skirts of a whore." Burgess lived in the city for many years. He has hymned it previously in *Beard's Roman Women* (Ron Beard in town to write a screenplay about that Romantic dream of resurrection, *Frankenstein*) and *Abba Abba* (Keats dies of consumption; *abba* is also Aramaic for father). Rome is a state of mind rather than a mere city, as Claudius asserts when he decrees that colonials may consider themselves Roman so long as they subscribe to the laws and religion of the capital.

For Burgess the historical-romanticist, however, states of mind are only possible to depict if made manifest, if they become part of the toggery and decoration. Mind has to become a symptom of the body. The Empire is a body, and revolts and uprisings are contaminations of its integument. For the Nazarenes, "The body is God's work and very wonderfully made." Ingesting wine and bread, at Communion, is a way of exalting it. Saul's collapse on the road to Damascus is interpreted as an epileptic fit. Burgess (or is it Sadoc?) presents the frothing and spasms, but is not willing to peer at mental activity: "I can only guess at Saul's dreams, which must have been manifold and complex." From the cogitations of Ananias we are again kept away. He casts "a look of inner torment, perhaps intestinal." Sadoc is the main Boswell of the bowel. Each chapter is introduced with a medical bulletin. Dyspeptic, arthritic: writing, it is alleged, inculcates aches. The novelist's paw is "no mere abstract engine", but belongs to the network of "nerve, muscle, blood and digestion that have some part in the driving of that hand." The human as a physiological cybernaut is a constant preoccupation of Burgess's: the clockwork orange is a fusion of the machine and the flesh (*orang* is Malay for man), and in a novel called *The Doctor is Sick* attributed brain-damage comes to be seen as a state of health. In the midst of life we are in death: Dr Edwin's mentor is a Mr Thanatos. *Nothing Like the Sun* contains the twist that Shakespeare's talent was nursed by the spirochete; the tubercle, as already mentioned, contributed to Lawrence's manic movement.

Illness is aleatory. We do not choose our diseases, they come by chance: "Chance, they sometimes say, is one of the toys of God." Breaking the body, though, can be contrived. *The Kingdom of the Wicked* is an ungiving chain of beatings, whippings, stonings, mutilations, slayings—carried out by princes and pious alike. Tiberius lives on Capri and gloats in a lubricious amusement arcade. Claudius intends being "the surgeon who will administer the emetic and excise the ulcer", but the imperial purgative is soon lusting incestuously after Agrippina, his niece. He is no kindly old dodderer, as played by Derek Jacobi or Charles Laughton, but a stern anti-Semite

[2] *Flame Into Being*. By ANTHONY BURGESS. Heinemann, £9.95.

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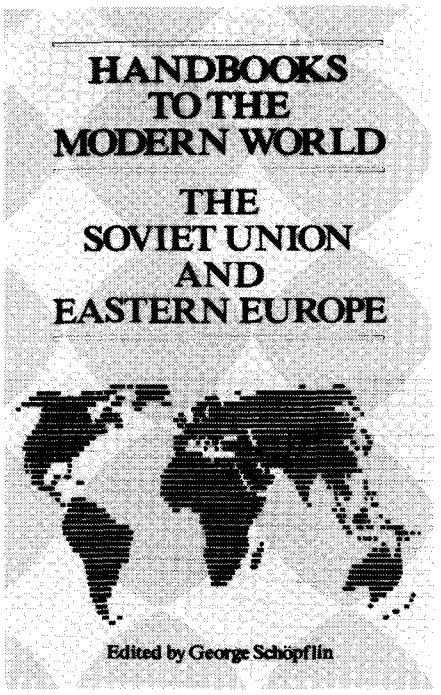


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who castigates the Jews as a menace to public order. Rome, a cankered body, has a worse personification: as a vengeful, efficient military machine—which is how the book ends, with systematic slaughter of Christians and a foreshadowing of the *Reich*'s genocide.

CLAUDIUS AT LEAST isn't homosexual—yet Burgess doesn't censure the proclivity: *Earthly Powers* is the memoir of an octogenarian fag; in *The Wanting Seed* there is a motto, "It's Sapiens to be Homo." Others make up the deficiency. Caligula fondles and gropes; Nero works up his pleasures into an aesthetic creed: "The whole point of being an emperor is the total freedom it confers." The dictum comes from Selvaticus, "a poet exiled for blatant sodomy" in Claudius's reign. His words derive, so Burgess told Richard Ellmann and me, from Oscar Wilde, in whose critical writings we find the conceit that artists don't imitate but improve unruly nature; they tame, order, neaten. As Selvaticus puts it (sounding more like Walter Pater than Oscar Wilde): "everything must bow down to beauty, and . . . the artist is above the regular moral concerns of ordinary humanity." The artist is a God.

A connection urges itself here. In *Here Comes Everybody*, his Joyce critique, Burgess says that it is every writer's ambition to rival the Almighty by creating an alternative universe on paper. Quantity, prolixity, is what will set the artist in competition with heaven's matchless king. Caligula, by deifying himself, became a parody God meting out punishments and rewards by whim. Nero's deification, as Burgess presents it, is the more illuminating: he is an extension of the critic as artist from the Joyce book. Yet where Burgess (and Oscar Wilde) mean to keep lordly creativity in the regions of fancy and its associated literary, pictorial and musical forms, Nero carries out his ideas in actuality. Human life is "fissile and susceptible of new shapes." As Emperor, he is raised above the law, and "it follows that only the individual whom rank has raised above the law is free to pursue beauty to the limit." A fellow seeker after sensation is Dorian Gray; Nero's Lord Henry Wotton is Petronius, a tutor in temptation. Another confederate is Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*. Nero joins a street-gang and carouses as a roaring-boy. Domitian later does likewise. The Imperial droogs spill blood as artists spill ink and paint.

The outcome of debauchery is a paradox and a contradiction: "true wisdom", says Nero, sexually spent, "lies in the nerves and in the arousing of the imagination"—exactly the lesson which *Flame Into Being* blesses Lawrence for having pointed out. For Lawrence, "the centre of his response to the external world was the solar plexus, not the cerebral cortex. . . . Well, there are plenty of scientific truths which reason has to accept, but there is no reason why our guts and instincts should have to bow to them." The apparent antagonism in Burgess between castigating Roman emperors for what a Nottingham writer rediscovered is no real antagonism. Firstly, Sadoc the narrator is ostensibly in charge of moral tone (though few will be taken in by that quaint device). Secondly, Burgess has filled many books with the glandular and the occult, the magical and the invisible. His Shakespeare is superintended by Venus; *The Eve of St Venus* brings the goddess to an English village; voodoo is in the Malayan novels and *Earthly Powers*. The paganism *Flame Into Being* enjoys—Burgess entranced by Lawrence's quest for strange gods—*The Kingdom of the Wicked*, despite itself, is enthralled by as well.

CONSIDER INCEST. Burgess wrote a whole novel about the subject in *MF*, basing his ideas on those of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Evidently the characters in this latest work have proleptically studied the Belgian anthropologist—who said that incest is a taboo initiated to proscribe endogamy and insist upon exogamy. Thus a tribe will make alliances and flourish; there will be no turning-in, no inbreeding. Claudius, to marry Agrippina, barks that "The Emperor is above taboos like incest." Censure comes from Seneca, who anachronistically propounds *The Scope of Anthropology* and *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*.

Incest taboos are not invented; somehow they are immanent: "There is an instinctive abhorrence of these acts which is based on an instinctive knowledge of what makes for stability of society." Seneca tells his pupil to read his play on Oedipus or, "your aversion to my style being so great, the play by Sophocles on which it is based." Burgess translated Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* for the Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, in 1972. The *apparatus criticus* in the printed version acknowledges Lévi-Strauss generously.

Oedipus and incest cannot get far without Freud—about whom Burgess wrote a novelistic biography in *The End of the World News*, and on whom he promises a musical. Tiberius refers to his mother as "you unkillable bitch", and Philip cures a crippled hand by coaxing the patient to confess he'd "struck his mother in a rage" and had found, "as he had thought, that God struck that hand and rendered it paralysed." Psychoanalytically, the apostle heals. Psychoanalytically, Nero rebels. "No boy", he says, striking Agrippina, "likes hitting his mother. Except, that is, in those bouts of love play one particular mother taught her son." He thrusts his hand into her dress and fondles her nipple. With Petronius he postulates a production of a real *Oedipus Rex*, with real incest and real mutilations on the stage. His rage against his mother is explicitly Freudian: "to put it bluntly, liberation from the womb" is what he desires by her demise.

In the Lawrence book Burgess makes the fascinating suggestion that he'll never fathom *Sons and Lovers* because, having lost his own mother when young (she died in the influenza epidemic after the Great War), he never knew the luxury of the Oedipus Complex. Burgess's mother was a pretty music-hall singer, of whom spectral photos survive. I suspect that the fiery muse and Venusian goddess who stalks so many of his pages, guarding, flirting, is in fact an incarnation of the lost maternal force. He has created luxury in art. Why the interest in incest? It is the secret dream of the dispossessed and lost. Oedipus thought himself an exile, a wanderer: suddenly, madly, he learns he'd been in the embrace of his family all along. Incest is a way of coming home.

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ORGIASTIC ROMANS Burgess counterpoints with the chaste Nazarenes. *The Kingdom of the Wicked* does not succeed in making the religious life appealing, or interesting. Moral debate palls. The love of God, so much touted, is little evidenced by the omnipresent cruelty and surliness. To try and prevent the apostles from coming over as weak and wimpish, Burgess makes them comic in the sense that Mel Brooks is comic. Baptising is hard work—thousands to get through every day, like a novelist's word-count. Thomas is given a Scottish accent. Peter winces when roosters crow (like the crone in *Young Frankenstein*, mention of whose name causes horses to neigh). When flagellated, the disciples sing a shanty, like the tortured Jews in *History of the World*:

*Beat us and bash us*
*Lick us and lash us.*

Death is jolly. Christians go to the lions as to a bank-holiday spree. A cured cripple complains he's now made redundant from his profitable job as a beggar. Dining on leeks and onions, the holy twelve fart like the *Blazing Saddles* cowboys. Or is the allusion Joycean: "Gone with the wind. Hosts at Mullaghmast and Tara of the Kings"?

Leaving the divine dozen aside, Paul does furnish a few opportunities for intelligence and wit, chiefly in his private battles with the pricklings of the flesh. He has bodily cravings for an anonymous woman—"faceless as Eve and with Eve's body to comfort him, our first mother. . . ." The primal parent is the premier mistress. Burgess, not quite able to excite us with bland and flatulent Christians, certainly cannot make Christianity compete with "Aphrodite and Astarte or Ashtaroth who was Hellenized to Artemis and Romanized to Diana." Diana, the huntress, and Venus are in cahoots. They pursue Enderby through *Enderby Outside*. Though Luke has to treat a temple prostitute for the clap, the goddess of love is dangerously real. Her paganism trepans Nazarene restraint. "The goddess . . . is no wraith or fiction—she is real enough", says Paul. "The goddess is a great nuisance." Paul joins many other Burgess heroes in being rewarded, at long last love, with "a nocturnal emission", a wet dream. "He wished, of course, to be back in bed with his mother, comforted to sleep." The book concludes with *una nox dormienda* when the Earth Mother sinks Pompeii: "our mother our killer" intones the text.

Oedipus learns about incest last; that he's a wanderer he knows all along. When he is reborn into his new name and personality, Paul recapitulates Oedipus's original banishment. Burgess notes the filioparental dialogue. The son, his new name bereft of any connotations so far as the mother is concerned, can be a son no more. Saul she knew; Paul is "disinherited and disowned." This is as much private turmoil, even private life, as Burgess is willing to give his character. We can speculate how much the Saul/Paul transformation recalls the transformation of Anthony Burgess (*né* John Wilson). Henceforward in the novel, the apostle is an itinerant preacher, popping up in a dozen different cities like a mystical Jan Morris (he is too purposeful in his voyaging to be the rambling Lawrence). It is not Paul but his beliefs which take over the other Oedipal theme—that

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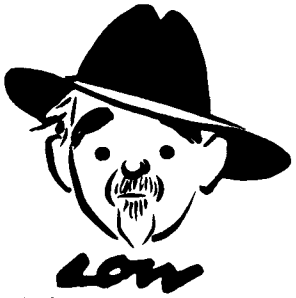


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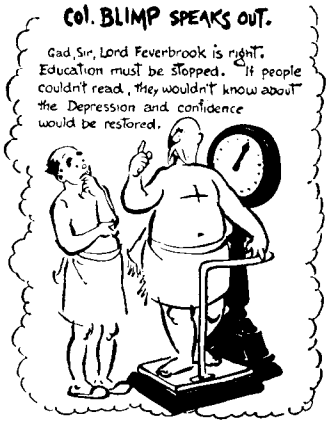
Col. BLIMP SPEAKS OUT.
Gad, Sir, Lord Feverbrook is right. Education must be stopped. If people couldn't read, they wouldn't know about the Depression and confidence would be restored.

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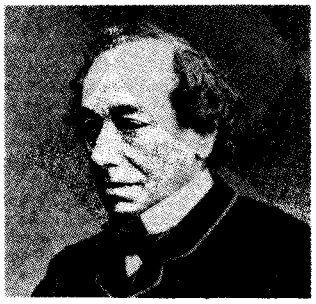
of parricide. Strike the father dead: Christianity is the young theory ready to oust the older established one. Christ usurps Moses, replacing the *lex talionis* with gentler doctrines.

His narrative now a trepidatious travelogue, Paul becomes Autolycus, "purveyor of scraps and trifles" (a *Winter's Tale* allusion), and a Joycean Odysseus sniffing the sea: "*Thalassa*. . . . Or *thalatta*, according to the dialect you prefer." Mulligan trills, looking at Dublin bay, "Thalatta! Thalatta! She is our great sweet mother." When he leaves Rome, Paul is even sung the aria from *Martha* Bloom hears: "Come back again, come back. . . ." But the borrowings from other literatures (there are several Shelley and Shakespeare gags), besides making a nonsense of the Sadoc business, don't do any work. They are little authorial games, like those of an interior-decorator who scribbles on the plaster before hanging the wallpaper. Paul is gradually ridiculed. His famous letter to the Corinthians is dictated like a busy tycoon: "And the greatest of all these is love. Got all that?" he inquires of the stenographer.

THE BRAND OF CUSSING COMEDY Burgess is fond of, the way saints and sinners are slapstick and caricatured, betrays the novel's true arena: it is a television show. "Thank you all for coming", croons Caligula like David Frost, after a murderous banquet. The episodic structure will translate into programme schedules. Thus, too, the descriptive nature of the text: Sadoc is a camera or a slipshod producer, who cocks up Burgess's work. Hence the errors and falsifications bemoaned in the author's note. Brawling and skirmishes are entertainment: "Action. You had to act sometime, no good just talking about action." Rumbustiousness, calmed by Jane Austen, Woolf, James, is theatrical (as in Dickens); put in a novel now, it beckons to the very earliest picaresque energy of *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, novels which still had their heart in fractious drama and Drury Lane. Though *The Kingdom of the Wicked* owes a debt to *Marius the Epicurean* and Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (Burgess finishes with Vesuvius erupting) with its pedagogy and arcane lore, a closer influence is the screen: the versions of *I, Claudius*, Gore Vidal's *Caligula*, Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis?* (especially the 1951 Mervyn Le Roy production with Peter Ustinov as Nero) and Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus*. Only a churl would mock Burgess for wanting the novel to become a branch of show-biz.

# Disraeli's Invention

## *The Political Novel*—*By* CHARLES MOSLEY



WHAT IS a political novel? Leaving aside fables such as More's *Utopia*, *Gulliver's Travels*, Benjamin Disraeli's *Popanilla*, and futuristic exercises such as *1984* and Zamyatin's *We* (all, perhaps significantly, by authors not, or not at that time, professionally involved in politics), one might say that in the English tradition it tends to feature ministerial and parliamentary life, or at any rate the struggle to get into Parliament and possibly, having got there, to gain office. Naturally the focus varies according to whether the author is a practising politician, as Disraeli was from quite early on, or an MP *manqué* like Trollope.

It was Guizot who principally drew attention to Disraeli as the first political novelist, and he was certainly the English founder of that art form, although in a European context Stendhal, with *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830) and *Lucien Leuwen* (1894), runs him close. Disraeli's early novels, written when he was just as unsuccessful on the hustings as Trollope, are obviously less concerned with specifically administrative problems than his later ones. But even the latter are astonishingly unconcerned with the actual mechanism of government.

What Disraeli does provide in abundance is ideas. In this he is an exception. Kathleen Tillotson has observed[1] that his heroes Coningsby, Egremont, and Tancred all think—though perhaps fitfully. This passage was misleadingly cited by Lord Blake in his *Disraeli* (1966) as if it applied to all Disraeli's heroes. Actually, one can ascribe ratiocinative powers to a wider selection of Disraeli's characters than does either Mrs Tillotson or Lord Blake. Even Disraeli's figures of fun like Sir Vavasour Firebrace have a programme, however dotty the erection of baronets into an order of *equites aurati* may be. As for the celebrated passages in *Coningsby* (1844) and *Sybil* (1845) urging the revival of paternalistic monarchy and excoriating the Whigs' "Venetian Oligarchy", they are surely unique, in Disraeli's day or after, in that they plant a manifesto into a work of fiction—and do it very neatly too. There are novelistic parallels in the dialogue of Peacock's novels and W. H. Mallock's *New Republic* (1877). But the latter makes no proper attempt at being a novel, and the sole excursions of Peacock into anything more politically solid than table talk are the slapstick irruption of the *jacquerie* into

[1] Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (1954).

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Chainmail Hall at the end of *Crotchet Castle* (1831) and the hilarious rotten-borough election of the orang-outan Sir Oran Haut-ton, Bart., in *Melincourt* (1817).

Disraeli, for all his carelessness, does at his best achieve a temporary synthesis of political ideas and plot. Unfortunately, the notions he advances are mostly so absurd as to border on high camp, and the trappings he caparisons his characters with scarcely help. For example, there can be no English novelist so given to resurrecting the names of the high medieval nobility: Scrope, de Vere, Mowbray, Mountchesney, Bohun, Montacute, and Montfort. Given contemporary yearnings after a make-believe Gothicism, superimposed on his native romanticism, Disraeli was bound to indulge. Still, his vision of the Middle Ages—flower of chivalry, that sort of thing—was sufficiently rooted in his own time to be a Tory one rather than full of the collectivist tendencies William Morris looked back to. (Morris was much influenced by More's *Utopia*.) Unfortunately this meant that Disraeli could not develop a very coherent political philosophy. It was based on such a selective reading of history.

All the same, Disraeli's eccentric line on the Middle Ages had its strengths. In *Sybil*, Walter Gerard defends the monasteries' charitable role. Given that it is put in secular terms it is as good a case as anything that Thomas More might have made along the same lines. And Gerard's trenchant attack on the game laws has seldom been expressed more forcefully and economically. Think how Cobbett goes on about the spoliation of the peasantry. (Curiously enough, an excellent and succinct demolition of the Corn Laws occurs in *Popanilla*. Disraeli was lucky not to have it cast in his teeth after he broke with Peel in 1846.)

Perhaps the most important instance of Disraeli's putting his medieval obsessions to good use is Eustace Lyle's revived Christian paternalism in *Coningsby*. Though described with the author's customary tendency to stick his tongue in his cheek, it helps illustrate a practical working of that Tory paternalism which, along with all paternalism, has been too promptly ridiculed and for which Disraeli's novels are the nearest to an intellectual justification. Disraeli's social legislation in the 1870s may not amount to much as a conscious programme of amelioration prosecuted according to a rigorously planned paternalistic idealogy. What government's actions do follow neatly a predetermined programme? But it was carried out by a government whose leader had written feelingly about poverty and had invested responsibility by the upper classes with glowing, if slightly absurd, hues.

ALTHOUGH WE NOWADAYS THINK OF the politician novelist as a rather rare creature, nimbly combining onerous official duties with flights of creativity, the blend of statesmanship and imaginative literature in one person is as old as the novel itself. Petronius was not just a crony of Nero and leader of first-century fashion, but a successful governor and consul. (It is true that the *Satyricon*—at any rate in the truncated form we possess today—eschews politics, unless one counts Eumolpus's bitter castigation of the venality of Senate and people in his lines on the Civil War.) In the 16th century Sir Philip Sidney, one of the earliest English novelists, not only practised politics but introduced the subject into his fiction. As well as representing Elizabeth I on diplomatic missions, he stood high in her circle of domestic counsellors and was also an MP. (Sidney briefly visited Ireland, but only to see his father, who was Lord Deputy there; had he succeeded his father in the post, as was briefly mooted, his *curriculum vitae* would have borne an even closer resemblance to that of our contemporary statesman/novelist Douglas Hurd, until recently Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Sidney's *Arcadia* contains two or three passages of political exposition. It preaches a paternalistic monarchism very like that which Disraeli so endearingly but unconvincingly recommends in *Coningsby*. And not only does Disraeli borrow Sidney's name for his character Lord Henry Sydney (based on Lord John Manners), but that of the historic Sidney's friend Sir Thomas Coningsby for his hero. (George Smythe, usually recognised as the principal model for Coningsby, was collaterally descended from Sir Philip Sidney.) Moreover, Disraeli refers to Sidney outright in *Endymion* (1880). (Endymion was the forename of the third Viscount Strangford, whose father was Sir Philip Sidney's great-nephew; this Endymion was also great-great-grandfather of George Smythe.) Not only Disraeli's fanciful names for his characters but his love of a Near Eastern or Greek setting and his frequently florid and hyperbolic language have their harbingers in Sidney's *Arcadia*. So Disraeli, although the real founder of a genre, did not stand entirely apart from a certain tradition.

DISRAELI'S NOVELS reflect his personality more obviously than most writers'. Perhaps nobody has flouted more wantonly Flaubert's dictum that the novelist should be everywhere but, like God, unseen. *Vivian Grey* (1826), *Contarini Fleming* (1832), and *Henrietta Temple* (1836) are the most overtly autobiographical, but all bear their author's peculiar impress. This makes for an interesting rift between Disraeli's tales of high life and the political realities in his professional career. Disraeli had a broadminded, cosmopolitan, cultivated, and aristocratically inclined

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character which in social terms consorted better with what one thinks of as the typical Whig magnifico than with the narrower country squires who in practice formed the backbone of the Tory Party.

In this respect Disraeli's case is a curiously complementary contrast with his younger contemporary Trollope's. Although Trollope supported the Liberals he was by background from the old Tory squirearchy. (It is often forgotten, so great is the emphasis on Trollope senior's improvidence in Trollope's autobiography, that he came of an ancient family, well established as landowners centuries before they became baronets.) In his attitude towards the Greshams and the Fletchers and the Whartons in his novels it is easy to see where Trollope's visceral sympathies lay. Disraeli is exactly the opposite. He was more at home in houses such as Stowe or Deepdene, yet was the political leader of Victorian England's Whartons, Fletchers and Greshams, squires of impressive lineage but threatened rent-rolls, provincial ascendancy but metropolitan insignificance.

A UNIQUE ELEMENT in Disraeli's novels is the theatrical one. He was himself a highly theatrical man, although the fact may have been obscured from contemporaries by his tendency—at any rate after a flamboyant youth—to underplay. (The Victorian age preferred ranters, like Edmund Kean in his melodramas or Henry Irving in virtually anything; Disraeli became famous for his impassivity.) In nearly every novel there is a play, whether publicly or privately performed. Now, it is a commonplace that politicians have many similarities to actors, as both have with barristers. And it has been suggested that MPs' theatrical, even buffoonish antics in the House of Commons ritualise and therefore soften the acerbity of opposition. In the days of a narrowly restricted franchise it would be almost true to say things were the other way round: elections ritualised violence. They were often highly dramatic, being conducted under conditions of near-carnival, saturnalian exuberance, with broken heads and windows, hurled brickbats, broached hogsheads, etc. Since universal suffrage, elections have become comparatively tame affairs.

Naturally Disraeli was not the only writer of his time to deal with elections. Indeed the literature of such contests would make a little anthology: Dickens with Eatanswill in *Pickwick Papers* (1837), for instance, and Surtees with Jorrocks's contest against the Marquess of Bray in *Hillingdon Hall* (1845)—over Corn Law repeal too. Trollope is good on elections, especially over Frank Tregear's canvassing at Polpenno in *The Duke's Children* (1880), where, for all the massive prestige attaching to Tregear's friend and supporter Lord Silverbridge, the author makes it clear that victory is attributable to the diligence of a local tailor. But only Disraeli could devote a whole novel to a local contest, as he did in partnership with his sister, albeit pseudonymously, in *A Year at Hartlebury, or The Election*, by "Cheri and Fair Starr" (republished in 1983, in which year its true authorship was publicly proclaimed).

Related to the dramatic aspect of politics is clearly a fantasy side of sorts, and Disraeli is particularly given to an almost fantasy idealism. For example, although the politician must be shrewd in assessing what is and what is not possible, he also lives by making unfulfillable promises. This element of wishful thinking may account for many political novels; manifestos are mostly too bland to accommodate even the sheer fantasy of a Karl Marx. (Consider the notion of the withering away of the state: pure moonshine.) It is not surprising that the novels of a politician so fertile in expedient as Disraeli should have a fairy-tale flavour. How much easier it is to manipulate characters of one's own creation than real people! So Vivian Grey, the young man on the make, has all the impudence and skill at bluff of Puss in Boots. (Both worked to advance a Marquess of Carabas, although one cannot see Vivian displaying the cat's selflessness.) There are numerous references to fairy tales in other Disraeli novels. Once it is a comparison with Ricquet of the Tuft (like Puss in Boots a Perrault creation.) Sometimes it is merely a comparison with the fairy-tale atmosphere as such. *Endymion* is a sustained fairy tale: one of the poor orphaned twins becomes Prime Minister, the other a queen. And of course Disraeli was fond of referring to Queen Victoria as "the Faery."

FOR ALL DISRAELI'S NOSTALGIA and love of dreams, he could put some of them into effect. It would not be true to say the political ideas expressed in his novels bear no relation to his actions in office. He was a masterly politician who made some of his fantasies come true. This is more than most people do, whether politicians or otherwise, and it is partly why he is so endearing. The harmlessness of his fantasies is an added attraction. Politicians in the 20th century have had nastier ambitions, and those who have come closest to achieving their dreams have been nuisances at best. But in this general respect Disraeli has affinities with Mussolini, whose own venture into literature, *The Cardinal's Mistress* (1909), contains an interesting sub-Stendhalian treatment of the clergy, foreshadowing the author's adroit Papal Concordat of 1929. The essential point is that dictators go beyond conventional politicians in being prepared to act out their most bizarre fantasies. They are just that much less constrained, not so much by reality (for all too appallingly often they achieve their aims), but by that very British phenomenon of good form.

Though nobody could be more democratic than Disraeli, one does feel that there is much of the fantasy-fulfiller in him. Or perhaps it is his more-than-usually exotic imagination, a feature not especially noticeable in other democratic statesmen. The examples are instructive. Disraeli introduces Lord Beaconsfield into *Vivian Grey*—the pert effusion of his extremist youth—and some fifty years later himself chose to become Lord Beaconsfield. Fakredeen in *Tancred* (1847) urges the queen to sail away to the east and set up her empire there. Disraeli in 1876 made her Empress of India. (Saki, whose references to Disraeli show him too to be under the master's spell, has the royal family choosing Indian exile when the Germans invade Britain in *When William Came*, published in 1914.) *Sybil* ends with the heroine, an "old"

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Catholic whose surname is Gerard, regaining her family's barony, now called out of abeyance. In 1875 Disraeli created one Sir Robert Gerard, scion of an ancient landed family of Catholic recusants, a peer. But perhaps the truly astounding fulfilment of an early fantasy is the triumph of Disraeli in reaching the premiership at all, considering his youthful bumptiousness and exhibitionism. The other cases are little matters, but climbing to the top of the greasy pole, as Disraeli himself described it, is for a man of his early reputation rather as if the late Kenneth Tynan had ended in Number Ten Downing Street.

How good are Disraeli's novels? The truth is they are both excruciatingly bad and excitingly good. Some are so atrocious as to be unreadable even by a devotee of 19th-century fiction: the second parts of *Vivian Grey* and *Tancred*, nearly all of *Contarini Fleming* and *Venetia* (1837), much of *Henrietta Temple*. The mythological conceits such as *Ixion in Heaven* (1822-23) and *The Infernal Marriage* (1834) and the fable *Popanilla* (1828) are little to modern tastes, but have their moments. *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, *Lothair* (1870), and *Endymion*, on the other hand, are novels which only the great masters need be too proud to have written. (Disraeli, incidentally, must be one of the few novelists to win praise from Goethe, Heine, and F. R. Leavis.) It is a pity they are not better known.

Even a minor work such as *The Young Duke* (1831) can attract. It ought, for instance, to appeal to lovers of Balzac. The allusive witticisms of the dandies, so extraordinarily disembodied from any identifiable speaker as to foreshadow the technical experiments of Sybille Bedford and Claude Mauriac, are indeed rather better than that tediously sparkling dinner to which Raphael is haled in *La Peau de chagrin* (1831), though that is not saying much. The combination of high life and money troubles is as irresistible as in Balzac. Oddly enough, Disraeli had not read him at the time. Yet the two have several features in common: both came to mix in aristocratic circles though originally outsiders; both were hopeless about money; both had worked as lawyer's clerks; both looked to mistresses who were mother figures. I confess I even detect a faint whiff of the Carlos Herrera-Lucien de Rubempré relationship in the way Lord Lyndhurst took Disraeli, the fledgling politician, under his wing. But the parallels are chiefly embodied in the way Balzac locates political intrigue in the salon—a characteristic which, because of Balzac's enormous versatility and fecundity, we think of as more typically Disraelian.

Whatever one may say about Disraeli as a pure novelist, it is his political stories that get most attention. This is perhaps unfair considering that *Lothair*, reckoned by some his best work, is scarcely political at all, but rather a psychological study of a young noble trembling between fascination with the Scarlet Woman (Rome) and love for that personification of republicanism Marianne (Theodora). Disraeli preferred the prestige of politics to the praise heaped on authors, which was not of a very high order in his day. We need not repine on his behalf.

Right from the start Disraeli's will to power is overwhelming, and his novels reek of it. *Vivian Grey* is the work of a young puppy impatient for political influence. Yet even *Vivian Grey* forcefully teaches the precariousness of a mere adventurer's stratagems and the insubstantiality of *Château Désir*, that archetypal castle in Spain. Though Trollope usually conveys failure better than Disraeli, even he never catches the bitterness of Vivian at his sudden downfall. And Vivian is more "whole" than Ferdinand Lopez in *The Prime Minister* (1876), whose City speculations are remarkably like the young Disraeli's; the contrast between Lopez's early gloss and the desperado's shifts of the final scenes is too stark to convince.

*Coningsby* and *Sybil* are the works of a maturer careerist, and by the time *Lothair* and *Endymion* were published Disraeli had held the highest positions. Oddly enough, neither book much reflects this fact. Even *Endymion* is more concerned with the hero's social life than with his problems as Foreign Minister and Prime Minister. Yet there is a far greater feel of ambition about these books than in any other English works of political fiction, including Churchill's (the only such novelist apart from Disraeli to achieve supreme office). The predominant impression after a diet of Disraeli's novels is that the early struggles were what the author found most inspiring. Every single one except *Lothair*, which is notoriously untypical, is set during Disraeli's early life.


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THE POLITICAL NOVEL has become a genre in its own right since *Vivian Grey*. But was Disraeli an influence which those who came after him were aware of? Even apart from Trollope, who was born about ten years after Disraeli and survived him by a year, there might seem to be the obvious case of Maurice Edelman, with his quasi-biographical works of fiction about Disraeli himself. Actually Edelman's contemporary political novels, which are the truer continuation of that tradition, have more in common with C. P. Snow's, and Snow is predominantly heir to Trollope. But, even when apparently antithetical to the Disraelian style, these two 20th-century writers deal with solid plots of manoeuvre in which people play the game according to the rules, and the backdrop of public life is relatively tranquil. It is a world similar to, though less sumptuous than, Disraeli's: debates in the Commons, crises in the Cabinet, intrigue in country houses.

It may well be that this tradition owes more to the continuity of British politics and its seeming security until fairly recently. It is only from the early 1960s that the ground rules of British politics became radically different. Thriller writers such as Bertie Denham and the Douglas Hurd/Andrew Osmond partnership took over. Impatience with fair play, accepted ways of gaining power, and constitutional methods of promoting change were mounting. If one believes that novels reflect a society with an accuracy that is the more acute for being unconscious, then Hurd and Osmond represent a depressing change. Parliamentary drama fades away to nothing. The action tends to be sited in the executive, rather than in the legislature. Moreover, their villains are ensconced in the most exalted of high places: senior army officers, the sovereign's Private Secretary. (After the Anthony Blunt episode, even that may not be wholly inconceivable.)

Disraeli too could write of insurgency and threats to parliamentary sovereignty, though not actual terrorism. The fact that the 1830s and 1840s in the end saw Chartism fade away should not blind us to the genuine apprehensions of contemporaries, although Disraeli does not convey any very convincing feeling of terror among his aristocrats. This may be a literary failure, or it may be that the British tradition of the stiff upper lip forbade any displays of extreme emotion in real life, and Disraeli was simply being faithful to this when he made his characters lament the coming revolution in too insipid a fashion. That said, such scenes are not very numerous.

Since it appears that the mainstream political novelists of the 20th century owe more to Trollope than to Disraeli, it is pertinent to probe further into what Trollope himself felt about Disraeli. Although ultimately a full-time novelist, Trollope did not write his first political work of fiction till the 1860s. Disraeli was therefore the precedent against which Trollope reacted, whether in admiration or disgust. As it happens, Trollope ill conceals his hostility to the older man, but in a way this serves to underline Disraeli's extraordinary ascendancy. Trollope furnishes a waspish little sketch of his fellow-novelist in Mr Daubeny (or "Dubby" as he is familiarly known), and even when writing about someone wholly different can lapse into curiously Disraelian language: "He says he is as good a Conservative as there is in all Herefordshire, only that he likes to know what is to be conserved", or "A drunkard or a gambler may be weaned from his ways, but not a politician", or "The apostle of Christianity and the infidel can meet without a chance of a quarrel; but it is never safe to bring together two men who differ about a saint or a surplice." The first of these quotations, which is from *The Prime Minister*, appeared thirty years after Coningsby had asked the same question.

If one were so disposed, one could level some of the same charges against Trollope as against Disraeli. "Why will Mr D'Israeli be so fond of dukes?" asked Monckton Milnes in his celebrated (but anonymous) *Edinburgh Review* article (nominally a review of *Tancred*) on the novels;[2] and "What does Ben know of dukes?" supposedly enquired Ben's father Isaac. One might put such questions to Trollope, who not only devotes many pages to the political activities of the dukes of Omnium and St Bungay, but takes a very long novel to probe in the minutest detail into Omnium's domestic crises in *The Duke's Children*. Disraeli's *The Young Duke*, though frivolous enough, is at least eminently suitable, coming from a future Chancellor of the Exchequer, in that it conveys in fearful terms the perils of an unbalanced Budget, a lesson which could be digested with advantage by today's politicians. The truth is that in Disraeli's day a political novel without dukes would have been rather like one today without terrorists. Early Victorian Cabinets were a tangle of strawberry leaves, but by the time Trollope was writing (the 1870s and 1880s) such vegetation had become scantier.

ONE POLITICAL NOVELIST who was certainly under Disraeli's spell was Churchill, with *Savrola* (1900). For a start the prose style is in places a pastiche of the master's: "She had arrived at that age in life, when to the attractions of a maiden's beauty are added those of a woman's wit." And who can doubt that Churchill had Disraeli's kind of language in mind when he wrote: "The King of Ethiopia, horrified at the low dresses of the unveiled women and dreading the prospect of eating with odious white people, had taken his departure"? Or this: "The supper was excellent: the champagne was dry and the quails fat"? A healthy interest in food is typically Disraelian. Churchill even introduces a Countess of Ferrol, recalling the Count of Ferroll in *Endymion*. The tone of *Savrola* displays more than just the sort of unconscious echo of Disraeli observable in Trollope. The whole plot recalls Prince Florestan's triumphal restoration in *Endymion*. In any case it can plausibly be argued that borrowed tricks of style are more flattering than deliberate acts of *hommage* (as it is nowadays fashionable to call mimicry).

ANOTHER WRITER WHOSE WORK has reminded some critics of Disraeli's is Evelyn Waugh. Waugh was not a practising politician, but he must at one time have contemplated a parliamentary career, for he mentions the

[2] "Article VI. 1", *Edinburgh Review*, July 1847.

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possibility in his diary. (He also sought a consular post in Yugoslavia, though more from a sense of duty to his Balkan co-religionists than because of any inclination to assist British foreign policy as a Civil Servant.) Lord Blake has observed that Waugh's early novels are the only examples one can think of which ring with even a faint echo of Disraeli's. But there is more to it than that.

Waugh makes a direct reference to *Coningsby* in a novel of his middle period, *Put Out More Flags* (1942). He slyly compares the dishevelled Basil Seal with Lord Monmouth, who "never condescended to the artifice of the toilet." And he talks of Ambrose Silk exhibiting the swagger and flash of the young Disraeli. It is Waugh's *Black Mischief* (1932) which is the truly political novel, however. So pertinent does its theme remain that had the late Shah of Iran studied it he might have avoided disaster. Be that as it may, who can read about Basil Seal and his impudent plausibility, his personal ascendancy over the poor booby Seth, and their untutored meddling in affairs of state, without recalling Vivian Grey's management of the Marquess of Carabas?

Then there is Waugh's passion for recusant families, so copiously documented in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and the *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952, 1955, and 1961). Disraeli has him flat beat there. In *The Young Duke* there are the Dacres, in *Henrietta Temple* the Armines and Fr Adrian Glastonbury, in *Sybil* the Gerards and the Traffords, in *Coningsby* the Lyles, and in *Lothair* the families of Mgr Berwick and Lord St Jerome.

One might further contrast the tendency of Waugh, the Catholic, gratuitously to people his novels with Jews, mostly exotic ones, against Disraeli's equally gratuitous habit of introducing high-born Catholics. There can be no doubt that Disraeli had a considerable romantic attachment to the idea of beleaguered adherents of the "Old Faith" in penal and early post-penal times, just as Waugh did. Even though Disraeli quarrelled with O'Connell and in some speeches of his hot youth attacked papists with considerable vigour, it was in language that censured loyalty to a foreign power rather than any doctrinal or disciplinary deviance from Anglicanism. In the 1860s Disraeli flirted with the Roman Catholic voters—surely negligible numerically if one discounts the Irish, a group Disraeli did little to cultivate. Why then bother at all but for predominantly emotional reasons? Even the blackening of Manning in *Lothair* should be seen as a revulsion against ultramontanism (and Manning himself) rather than against Roman Catholicism as such. (Some old recusant families looked askance at Manning, come to that.) In *Endymion*, the product of Disraeli's autumn, the Anglican priest Nigel Penruddock, who "goes over" and is made a cardinal, is a noble being; the description of ritualism creeping over Hurstly after Mrs Job Thornberry's like conversion has a sweetly elegiac tone.

It is not too fanciful to assume that the plight of England's Roman Catholics before emancipation awoke the sympathy of a baptised Jew, for Disraeli's own people suffered civil disabilities as well. Further, the cult of Our Lady is bound to have attracted in compensation a male who felt as estranged from his mother as Disraeli did. Yet even here Disraeli could not resist laughing up his sleeve, for Contarini Fleming venerates Our Lady but confuses her with Mary Magdalene. A still more celebrated example of Disraeli's sardonic / affectionate attitude to Mariolatry is Eva's question to Tancred—is he one of those Franks who worship a Jewess or is he one of those that revile her and break her images? And it is worth comparing *Tancred* with Waugh's *Helena* (1950) where Helena's arrival in the Holy Land and her encounter with the Wandering Jew evoke memories of Tancred's encounter with Eva, though the former is written from a Christian angle rather than Disraeli's obsessional insistence that Jewish racial pride is essentially proto-Christianity. It also happens that *Helena* is Waugh's second most heavily political novel, containing fine descriptions of the dismal palace intrigue endemic to autocracy.

I am not for a moment suggesting that Disraeli approaches Waugh as a novelist, but both his books and his politics do at times reflect private preoccupations of a highly idiosyncratic nature. Moreover Disraeli always manages to be entertaining about the bees infesting his bonnet. Lastly, he makes it plain that to him politics is enormous fun. It is in this not unimportant respect that he heads an exclusive little principality inhabited by Churchill and Waugh. To the rest of the breed—Trollope, Edelman, Snow, even Harold Nicolson—statecraft may be satisfying, even rewarding; but it is not seemly to approach it in light-hearted mood.

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IF WE GRANT THAT Disraeli is the originator whom Trollope abhors but cannot ignore and sometimes even emulates, can it be said that the two form different faces of a single coin? Or perhaps that they stand for two types of political novelist—the Parliamentarian and the Civil Servant—between whom subsequent practitioners of the craft oscillate?

Writers of political novels are by no means all involved in politics in the same way. Some are Civil Servants, such as Stendhal. Trollope was at one time a Civil Servant, then briefly a parliamentary candidate, and eventually a professional writer who had gained manly independence by his pen. Harold Nicolson had resigned from the Foreign Office by the time he brought out *Public Faces* in 1932; he did not become an MP till 1935. Presumably Churchill had developed parliamentary ambitions by the time he wrote *Savrola*.

C. P. Snow, on the other hand, despite serving from 1964 to 1966 as a junior Minister in Harold Wilson's first government, never managed to rid himself of a predominantly Civil Service viewpoint. He certainly did not draw on his experience of office for his novels: Lewis Eliot in *Last Things* (1970) refuses a government job. Snow has been cruelly quoted as looking to Civil Service minutes as models for his prose style, and there is a pathetic little scene in *Last Things* where Eliot's former boss Sir Hector Rose proclaims the functionary's intellectual superiority to mere politicians. It amounts to a panegyric on Snow's own clearly indicated preferences in government: an orderly, intelligent mandarinate.

But let it not be thought Disraeli has no picture of the Civil Service in his novels. There is a vignette in *Endymion* where the hero is introduced to his new clerkship in a public office—the only preferment his once powerful father can procure for him. It stands up well to those marvellous pictures the Russian 19th-century novelists give of the bureaucracy, or the atmosphere of Balzac's *Les Employés* (1837).

In contrast to Disraeli, Snow shows extraordinarily little interest in ideas, far less than a stolid clubman such as Trollope. Even when describing what is presumably an early attempt at unilateral nuclear disarmament in *The Corridors of Power* (1964), he never tells us what precisely the protagonist Roger Quaife has in mind. Disraeli's characters are nearly all either reactionary or conservative according to 20th—century criteria yet are ideologically fecund, whereas Snow's are labelled "progressive" (Francis Getliffe) or "reactionary" (G. S. Clark), and that is that. They never discuss political ideas or have an argument about anything as abstract as strategy. Life appears to consist of endless small manoeuvres to advance oneself with people who count—sweetened, it is true, by a praiseworthy respect for hard work and a *petit-bourgeois* tendency to admire "professional people", as well as a genuine kindness to those less fortunate in life's obstacle race. There is just one preoccupation of Snow's which recalls a Disraeli novel: the excited speculation over who made the Athenaeum this time, whom the Royal Society has elected, who is to be the next Master, and the likely outcome of the passage of so-and-so's Bill through the House (never mind what it proposes). Although a more meritocratic world, it is really no different from Lord Monmouth's, Tadpole's and Taper's.

THERE IS THEREFORE a tenuous but genuine tradition of British political novels, and Disraeli, even though his direct influence has spent itself in Churchill or Waugh, remains head of the stream. Yet it is still possible that modern political novelists follow Disraeli in expressing their aspirations and attitudes to constitutional development. One would certainly expect politicians to write for reasons other than mere gain, if only because it must be something of a handicap for a politician to have written a novel at all. It took decades for Disraeli to live down *Vivian Grey*. Writers then were little revered, it is true. Even today, however much he may affect the *gravitas* necessary to a Cabinet Minister (though his awareness of what terrorists can stoop to may be as useful in his present job as Home Secretary as it was when he was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland), there will surely be many who find Douglas Hurd diminished by his forays into literature. Modern politicians' novels and their non-fiction are often intellectually threadbare, so much so as to suggest the whole struggle is indeed little more than a game. In that case they are just as bad as the worst interpretation put on Disraeli, that of Archbishop Tait, who accused him of appearing to treat politics as a "mere play and gambling." At least Disraeli amuses us while he does so.

It may seem that political novels cannot be both good literature and coherent treatises on statecraft. It would be truer to say that unless a novel is good it is unlikely to furnish a good treatise on statecraft. *Black Mischief* says much that is needful about the folly of over-rapid modernisation in the Third World. (Lord Bauer's economic lucubrations are merely a footnote to Waugh, much as Western philosophy is said to be to Plato.) Disraeli's best novels are those which hit off the combination of political programme and artistry most creditably.

It is a pity that politicians now prefer writing thrillers to conventional stories. Possibly they feel safer because nobody looks for messages in a thriller. Actually, Hurd and Osmond's books do have a message: that our rulers are gravely deficient in imagination and quick reactions, while democracy's enemies are unscrupulous and inventive. In a way this is nothing new. Disraeli's novels did not ignore extra-Parliamentary ferment. *Sybil* features Chartist agitation and no fewer than three cases of arson, the last and grandest, at Mowbray Castle, forming the novel's climax. *Lothair* is drenched with conspiracy: in an early chapter Disraeli describes a Fenian meeting and the secret societies pervade the action. Hurd and Osmond are more distressing; they imply that civilisation is fraying at the edges.

Disraeli believed one could only act upon the opinion of Eastern nations through their imagination. As the West becomes less self-confident and less disciplined, imagination may well have its uses in Europe. Neither rulers nor political novelists have even tried to answer Coningsby's question: "What will you conserve?" Still less has the Conservative Party.

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Douglas Hurd could try, perhaps. He may have had the imagination necessary for governing the Irish, and the recent riots in Handsworth are sufficiently reminiscent of the insurrections and agitations dealt with by Disraeli in *Sybil* to suggest scope for the new Home Secretary to exercise imagination on the British mainland. Hurd shows himself sufficiently enterprising to create genuine wealth with strokes of the pen, even if it is only for his own benefit, rather than the specious prosperity which interventionist politicians claim by their wizardry to be capable of producing. Could not he or some other literate politician give us a sequel to Disraeli's novel of ideas?

# Machine-Gun Morals & Lean Tales

## *Recent Fiction—By D. J. Taylor*

Presumably the satirist's tragedy is that he grows old. This is not to say that he is somehow emasculated, bought off by Arts Council grants, or turned into a guilt-ridden institutional lackey: more usually his worst enemy is nostalgia. The process goes something like this: X (a youthful, untarnished X who sees himself as a sort of cleanser of Augean stables on a grand scale) writes a novel in which much spleen is vented on abuses Y and Z, not to mention the society which fomented them. He then grows up. Possibly he writes other novels. At any rate, twenty-five years later, examining contemporary society, he is almost certain to loathe it because it no longer resembles the agreeable playground of his youth. To Bumbo Bailey, the resuscitated hero of Andrew Sinclair's new novel,[1] all is decadence, the most decent usages fallen into desuetude. Even undressing isn't what it used to be. "When Bumbo was young it took so long to get anywhere with a girl there was mystery in it." There can be few contemporary novels in which brassières, modern corsetry generally, act as an agent of moral decay.

Despite his academic credentials and a string of lively productions, Andrew Sinclair has never quite established himself as a writer whom it is possible to respect. His early novels (with the exception perhaps of *Gog*) have not worn well, and *The Breaking of Bumbo*, whose shades gather here in mid-life reunion, now seems unhappily dated though its irritating stylistic experiments are redeemed here and there by genuine high spirits. But the world has moved on and Bumbo, edging 50, Goncourt of *Public Sty*, his wife immersed in their divorce, resolves to sink the last of his capital into celluloid. The decision, based on a chance meeting with ageing cheesecake Lettice Laguna and the existence of a curious script entitled *Up Guards and Atom*, is an excuse for a tour of fashionable London; all of which becomes—in no very subtle manner—a target for the author's relentless punning.

One had observed this characteristic in Mr Sinclair's earlier work and trusted that he had grown out of it. He hasn't and the machine-gun of awful wordplay and lame jokes (the sort of prose *Harpers & Queen* would describe as "sparkling") is reminiscent of Frederic Raphael at his worst. "Puns are the sin of the English upper classes", remarks one of the characters defensively: it is small justification. Mr Sinclair has obviously done his best to render his satire up-to-date. The "young Fogeys" get a mention and there is some terrible nonsense on the subject of literary prizes, undermined by self-conscious striving for effect.

Meanwhile the film slouches (or rather sprints—schedules being what they are) to completion, after which its backers decide to write it off as a tax-loss; Bumbo's ex-wife is deserted by her new husband the morning after the wedding (the money wasn't there), his revolutionary son responsible for the final indignity whereby a group of film-extra guardsmen is induced to march on the Palace ("Up guards and at 'em"). Readers will find this either deliciously funny my dears or hopelessly anaemic. In my case regret was tempered by the renaissance of other early characters (including Ben Birt from Sinclair's second novel, *My Friend Judas*, now a middle-aged "Punk poet") and the realisation—prompted by a pathetic vignette of Mungo, the decaying film editor—that a considerable talent is being squandered. There are also two good jokes. "Immorality", one character remarks "has nothing to do with divorce." "Being in the Church of England", observes another, "isn't the same as having to believe in God." No indeed. "First novels win no prizes, they only get remaindered" is a third choice epigram, which I read with some alarm.

After such contrivance, compared to which *Carry On Jeeves* would appear to be a work of high moral seriousness, it is a relief to turn to Nigel Gray's *Happy Families*.[2] Mr Gray's book comes garlanded with quotes from pundits such as John

[1] *Beau Bumbo*. By Andrew Sinclair. Weidenfeld, £8.95.

[2] *Happy Families*. By Nigel Gray. Macmillan, £8.95.

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Berger and Edward Bond which attempt to establish it as a piece of scrupulous realism. Actually it is nothing of the sort. People do not, I think, inform their infant daughters, "We brought you into a stinking world, Sophie, and I'm sorry—we should never've done it"; nor, possibly, do they tell women "You've got lots of love in you. You're like an empty house now with wooden boards nailed across the doors and windows to keep people out." These are the book's worst excesses of dialogue but they do indicate that *Happy Families* is a moral fable, in which overstatement is demanded by material, form conditional on content.

It is difficult to criticise a sociological tract on literary grounds. The message of *Happy Families* is perfectly easy to summarise: children who are badly treated by their parents will, in an entirely natural progession, mistreat their own offspring. The story of Paul Greig is an unhappy illustration. Brutalised by his mother—shifted from orphanage to foster-home and back again—he grows up as an emotional fascist, fundamentally incapable of living happily with the two women, Laura and Sheila, with whom he is successively involved and who bear his children. Finally, after the cataloguing of unremitting misery, Sheila is taken away by the authorities. Paul suffocates Sophie and sits down to compose his explanation of what has happened. Arrogance, complacency, and sheer lack of reason are all attributable to his loveless upbringing.

The adjective that best describes all this is "raw." There is a graphic urgency about the descriptions: the accounts of people at the end of their tether are quite devastating. Mr Gray is a writer of exceptional power, and his evocation of the blood-guts-and-spunk side of emotional trauma is practically Lawrentian—in fact several steps further than Lawrence got—particularly as it is contrasted by odd, idyllic interludes (Paul seems at his happiest, emotionally, in the countryside). However, despite the power of the writing, such overstatement becomes tiresome. No doubt they do fuck you up, your Mum and Dad, but is human conduct so readily explicable, such a straightforward business of cause and effect? Another wet liberal quibble concerns the pat mockery made of officialdom—life being, as one character puts it, "the zombies against the normals, park-keepers, policemen. . . prison officers." Yes, of course, Mr Gray. How very sensible of you. An angry, impressive novel, *Happy Families* is weakened by the application to its characters of a type of rudimentary moral algebra. Suffering—however much you may regret it—is no excuse for bad art.

A COLLECTION sponsored by South East Arts and edited by Francis King, *Twenty Stories*, is one of the best things of its kind to have come out in recent years. [3] The pieces assembled in these Arts Council volumes are usually so jarringly dissimilar in tone and style as to deter you from reading them *d'un seul coup*, but the stories collected here have an agreeable consistency that is probably a result of editorial design. It is an axiom that editors usually select the type of stories they would like to have written themselves. This is a congenital fault, and the torrent of material about old ladies, confiding spinsters and domestic squabbling, set variously at funerals, in hospitals and boarding-houses, should not surprise anyone who is at all familiar with Mr King's own fictions.

There are some famous names among the unknowns, not all of them displayed to best advantage. The staccato sentences and fragmented dialogue of Gabriel Josipovici's "The Bitter End" are mitigated by the thought that Mr Josipovici has been getting away with this sort of nonsense for years. Wendy Perriam's "Angelfish", however, is a delicate account of jealousy gaining outward focus: the tale of a boarding-house lodger whose frigid landlady keeps tropical fish. The lodger, too, becomes obsessed by these luminous creatures until the enthusiastic reception of a new guest prompts him to purchase his own specimens and destroy them in a weird and symbolic act of revenge.

Among newer writers, ghostly shadows lurk: it is practically impossible to write your first short stories without acknowledging some very obvious debts. Rosemary Sayer's "Mrs Llewellyn" is an excellent treatment of a familiar theme: an elderly lady whose death encourages a last appreciation of her character. Told in the first person by a grieving friend and with revealing incidental remarks ("I should tell you that I believe in goodness"), it is another warning against categorisation. Although the narrator's conclusion is nothing more than "she had a good innings, Mrs Llewellyn", the accretion of detail and an air of authenticity make up for the lack of incident. Generally speaking there are two types of story on offer: the tale, which has a twisting narrative thread and is capable of tangential diversions, and the vignette in which a single incident is used to illumine a state of mind or an emotional crisis. Two good examples of the latter are Douglas Verrall's "Behind A Stone", in which a depressed middle-aged man declines to visit the bedside of a dying ex-girl-friend, and Dorothy Goulden's "The Girl In The Mad Hat" where a woman, bored by one of those public nuisances who feel they have to talk to strangers on trains, is suddenly confounded. "You called me stupid, and I thought you were my friend."

Not all the stories are so accomplished. A few display symptoms of amateurishness or a failure to live up to the promise of the opening lines: Beryl Lewin's "The Vocation", dissolving into a surrealist solution which the author is unable to sustain, is a good example. But despite an occasional feeling of cosiness, compounded by unadventurous subject matter—one or two of these stories would not look out of place in a romantic magazine—this is a fine and unpretentious collection. South East Arts should be congratulated on a sound investment.

ODDLY, THE ARTS COUNCIL was also called upon to underwrite *Lean Tales*, a collection of short pieces by James Kelman, Agnes Owen and Alisdair Gray. [4]

[3] *Twenty Stories*, Edited By FRANCIS KING. Secker & Warburg, £8.95.

[4] *Lean Tales*. By JAMES KELMAN, AGNES OWEN, and ALISDAIR GRAY. Jonathan Cape, £8.95.

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Given Gray's reputation and Kelman's promise, this seems unnecessary; my own opinion is that the money could have been put to better use. *Lean Tales* seems principally useful as a means of introducing James Kelman's talents to a wider public. Kelman achieves his effects—it is something Beckett does—by being eerily precise about the unfamiliar. So a story will begin: "I once met an old lady sitting under a bridge over the river Kelvin. She smoked Capstan full strength cigarettes and played the mouth organ." The image is captivating; the reader bustles on. Many of the incidents recounted here, some of them no more than a page or two in length, are chapters in the life of one of Kelman's favourite personae, the philosophical Scots vagrant, drawn to London by the promise of warmth and anonymity, his thoughts expressed in a language that is simultaneously prosy and demotic. This character is deployed in "In A Betting Shop To The Rear Of Shaftesbury Avenue", recognising a fellow Scot and desperately trying to stoke the conversation until the man manages to evade him. Best of all are the two pieces "Extra Cup" and "A Night-boilerman's Notes", the latter with its complete self-preoccupation achieving the same sense of fractured detachment as Kafka's "The Burrow." The short story seems to be Kelman's natural medium: in contrast, his recent novel *The Busconductor Hines* was a disappointment.

Of the two other contributors, Agnes Owen's talent is possibly the more conventional, but she displays (particularly in "Arabella") a Scots eccentricity not dissimilar to the prose pieces of Ivor Cutler. "Bus Avenue", alternatively, is a horrifying piece of realism describing the stabbing of a boy in a bus queue before the eyes of an indifferent public. Alisdair Gray's contributions seem curiously makeweight. The exception is "A Report To The Trustees Of The Bellahouston Travelling Scholarship." A young painter explains the misfortunes encountered in his journey to Spain, culminating in an attack of asthma which has him carted off the ship to a Gibraltar hospital. Stylistically dead-pan, the tale is irradiated by light, bright shafts of madness: in the hospital, inmates discourse cheerfully on the subject of "sad waste-paper baskets." What did the excursion teach? Not much about the world "but a lot about myself." Rueful self-absorption, a characteristic Gray shares with Kelman, is the distinguishing mark of this brooding but often hilarious collection.

# Conceit & Concern

## *Recent Poetry Reviewed—By John Mole*

FOR SHEER WEIGHT, the book of the season must be Roy Fuller's. To begin his *New and Collected Poems* [1] at the beginning is, as Randall Jarrell once remarked of another poet, like receiving Auden's carbons for Christmas. All the familiar '30s landmarks line themselves up for the next decade, simplified by their familiarity. "The objects are disposed: the sky is suitable", the airman's in his heaven and all's wrong with the world. It's a "wounded land." Offshore an explicitly phallic lighthouse stands "aloof with rolling eyes." Practising its surreal deceptions, "the false clock is ticking on the mantelpiece", while the dead practise their "executive gestures." The intelligentsia feels "generalised compassion" and the poet, thinly disguised as a somewhat routine crime-writer, is by now all too accomplished at springing "the necessary surprise." The necessary murder hangs guiltily in the air. Choice has become a recession of closing options and, such as it remains, is presented to fellow combatants from a dais in the Briefing Room. We're at *real* war now. Up go the didactic, unarguable lines on the Commander's blackboard, and his baton points them out: "Now man must be political or die:/Nor is there really that alternative." And so on.

The more strident the public certainties, the greater the personal confusion for Fuller caught between "the illusory and real." He writes, for the duration, as a contemplative on active service with a job to do, but although he wears an officer's uniform his "only rank is consciousness", that hinterland where every man is his own private:

> *Even the road conveys the sense*
> *Of being outside experience;*
> *As though, this winter night of war,*
> *The world we made were mine no more.*

So, gradually, a characteristic, individual voice emerges. Having removed the Auden shorthand from his notebook, Fuller begins to develop his natural bent for well-read, scrupulous meditations on the residual ills of the mid-20th century, often accompanied (or prompted) by a catalogue of his own anxieties and discomforts. In a poem on the death of André Gide in 1951 he reads the news, typically after a night of insomnia, then goes on to contemplate a future in which

> *Whatever routes the intellectuals haunt*
> *Around the action of their times will want*
> *The practical travel notes of Gide. . . .*

Although he remained loyal to Auden long after he

[1] *New and Collected Poems 1934-84.* By ROY FULLER. Secker & Warburg, £14.95.

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stopped using Macspaunday travel notes, and although he has indeed paralleled the master's rapid ageing by carefully contriving a persona of premature crustiness and mock-bufferdom, Fuller's particular brand of wry, ironic *Angst* has become very much his own. It is his strength and his limitation. Despite disclaimers as to the power of poetry to change the world, there's always the sense when reading Auden that history is being made, that his work is somehow an active part of the *Zeitgeist*, making—as Fuller claims for Gide—"an alteration in the epoch's tense." His come-and-go obsessions with psychoanalysis and fashionable rigmarole in the '30s and early '40s seem less a peripheral dabbling than a kind of cultural urgency.

Fuller, on the other hand, has inherited the shift that this urgency brought about, and his continuing achievement has been to modify it according to his more modest lights as a poet acutely sensitive to historical and social change. His poems really do make nothing happen, and that is what they are ruefully but resolutely about. Built into them is the awareness that they are civilised footnotes to a destiny already shaped elsewhere, and their rhetorical flourishes often amount to an honourable, resonant shrug:

> *Anticipate the ice-age as you can,*
> *Anticipate the burning should it come,*
> *Live with your death, your species' death—with craft,*
> *That on this globe, and those unknown and past,*
> *The gases and the carbon spirals clasp*
> *A spirit fearful but immortal somewhere.*

Fuller recognises in himself one of those intellectuals who, in the words of the Gide poem, "haunt/Around the action of their times", and his best work emerges from the accuracy with which he analyses various shades of political conscience and personal inertia. Like Brutus in that fine poem "The Ides of March" he often considers every angle of the moment when one might be "about/To cease being a fellow traveller", but inevitably Brutus's final, fateful greeting to the conspirators ("Good morning, comrades") is not for him. Instead, in his sonnet sequence "The Historian", he establishes a characterisation and setting which is to become, increasingly, his starting point:

> *The scene my study: Faustian locale!*
> *I speculate on my lack of energy*
> *Before the tempting foolscap, and decide—*
> *My theories staggering, my learning sound—*
> *That I am sickening for a minor ill;*
> *And wonder how in my solitary life,*
> *I caught the bug. Unquestionably I ache.*

It's all there in that stanza: the curious lack of energy with its hint that it might be a symptom of the times but nevertheless about to be transformed into a full-stretch of thoroughly accomplished craftsmanship; the ambiguously *staggering* theories of a writer confident of his learning but unable not to doubt its ultimate value; the Faustian locale with its nervously jokey glance at the moral consequences of ambition; and the premonition of "a minor ill" which of course anticipates the inescapably major one which calls everything into question.

In those early days of easy Audenesque gestures, it was a stage-prop horizon which appeared "like an illness", but increasingly in Fuller's work, however full of ranging speculation it may be, the key-note is a personal one. He prefaces a set of memorial poems with an epigraph—again from Gide—which states plainly that "Illness is to reconcile us to death", and in a sense most of his recent work has haunted around that sentence. The older he gets, the wittier and more self-deprecatingly occasional his observations become:

> *My briefcase falls open in the street. Displayed:*
> *Aspirins for migraine, chocolates for my wife.*
> *Despite my "Oh bugger", strangers come to aid*
> *The old boy picking up his bits of life.*

But, despite the "Oh buggers" that find their way into his verse as the quotidian gets him into muddles and not much seems to be in the right place any more, "the young boy still continues on his foolish course", open to new experience and experimenting with a variety of forms even if, rather too wilfully, most of them tend towards the elegiac. Or perhaps that very wilfulness is a ruse:

> *I must return*
> *To the usual perils of longevity*
> *In the man of letters. Being out of date*
> *And out of print, and feeling orphaned, I*
> *Can't help a grin at my self-pity.*

Few poets have aged with such spry acceptance as Roy Fuller, or with such emphasis on the aches and pains. There's seldom less than a gleeful relish in his complaints. His "gerontic pacings" are a distinctive dance to the music of time, and now that he is so handsomely and bulkily in print may his grin widen as he slips out to buy the aspirins and chocolates.

PERHAPS AT THE SAME TIME he might like to buy an unbirthday present for his fellow septuagenarian Norman MacCaig. If so, MacCaig's poem "Request" offers him the choice of "a box of telepathy,/a bottle of clairvoyance,/ and a gift of tongues." And if it weren't such a clear case of carrying scotch to Edinburgh, he could simply combine all three by presenting the old wizard with a copy of his own *Collected Poems*.[2] It's a huge crate of a book of bottles, boxed as a gift, packed and fluent, full-measured and effervescently spirited. MacCaig has been corking his miniatures since 1955 and shows no sign of closing the still. Each page should carry a health warning for the prosaic: "These poems may seriously affect your balance." They are full of the drunkenness of things being various but they also recall Richard Wilbur's comment on verse craftsmanship: that "the strength of the genie comes of his being confined in a bottle."

Despite its celebration of abundance, MacCaig's restless, playful, wise imagination seldom runs over. It filters carefully

[2] *Collected Poems*. By NORMAN MACCAIG. Chatto and Windus, £9.95.

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into each poem, drop by drop, glinting with a purposeful intellectual mischief—questioning, puzzling over natural phenomena and thriving on its own inexhaustible draught of correspondence. In a short progress-report-cum-apologia, "Still Going" (and I'm only half-prepared to believe he's innocent of the pun in that title), MacCaig writes:

> *I won't give up being deceived by landscape's*
> *Likenesses and incorrigible metaphors.*
> *They swish long currents in my mind—fancy*
> *A stagnant mind: a crystal of braincells.*

That "fancy" is typical. At one and the same time it's an invitation, a philosophical brain-teaser and an exclamation —"Fancy that!" Few poets are as adept as MacCaig at appearing utterly amazed by appearances. "Things", he seems to be saying, "are not only more various than we suppose but more various than we *can* suppose." He delights in giving vivid utterance to intimations of unity while insisting on their tantalising evasiveness:

> *A flower as possibility, burning with more*
> *Ambiguity than a flower's, melts and grows*
> *In the foregarden of my mind; and never*
> *Its lapsing selves are narrowed to a rose.*
>
> *How give to you, with only this to give,*
> *One flower that would be one and include*
> *(Even though it should die) in its strict sculpture*
> *All the wild roses in the wilder wood?*

MacCaig's kind of speculative inventiveness is bound to seem whimsical on an off-day, but he's so disarming that you're never quite sure if the day's his or yours. What is beyond doubt, though, is that he is a master of the metaphor as direct statement where cleverness and feeling combine in a hauntingly plain-spoken accuracy:

> *When the door*
> *scraped shut, it was the end*
> *of all the sounds there are.*
>
> *You left me*
> *beside the quietest fire in the world.*
>
> *I thought I was hurt in my pride only,*
> *forgetting that,*
> *when you plunge your hand in freezing water,*
> *you feel*
> *a bangle of ice round your wrist*
> *before the whole hand goes numb.*

I first heard those lines on the radio twenty years ago. I have been able to quote them from memory ever since.

MICHAEL LONGLEY'S *Poems 1963-1983* [3] begins with "Epithalamion" and closes with "Rune", thus conveniently indicating the points of celebration and inscription between which his immaculately sensitive work negotiates. Of the prominent Ulster poets, he's the most adept at assembling the shards of a culture into firm, inclusive keepsakes. He has become a remedial poet. His spells are curative. Seamus Heaney may contemplate his shelf-life of significant objects, but Longley fragments his into verbal nuggets which he rolls in his palm, listening to them click as they catch the light. For him a characteristic poem is a close-up of ear and eye—enigmatic, allusive, at best piercingly unsentimental:

> *I make my peace with murderers.*
> *I lock pubic hair from victims*
> *In an airtight tin, mummify*
> *Angel feathers, tobacco shreds.*
>
> *All that survives my acid bath*
> *Is a solitary gall-stone*
> *Like a pebble out on mud flats*
> *Or the ghost of an avocado.*

This exquisitely naked miniature, in which violence and sweetness, sententious statement and intimate detail, are locked together within eight lines as airtight as that tin itself, was originally entitled "Love Poetry." It now appears in the "New Poems" section of Longley's collection as "Love Poet", shifting attention from the genre to the personal. This is instructive. Paradoxically the more oblique and runic Longley's method has become, the more intensely felt

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[3] *Poems 1963-1983*. By MICHAEL LONGLEY. The Salamander Press, £9.95.

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has seemed the pressure of emotion. For him the cryptic is revelatory. The earlier, expansively formalist poems—occasional celebrations, verse epistles, tributes—though accomplished enough and advertising an approachable, decent, thoroughly civilised poet, seem impersonal by comparison.

JENI COUZYN IS ANOTHER POET who has shown a keen sense of natural magic and ritual. Much of her best work has been in the form of secular spells and domestic incantations, often sharply up-to-date in their reference but cunningly primitive in their folk-lore cadences, their repetitions and parallelisms. The poems in the earlier sections of *Life by Drowning*,[4] although they often lapse into unexceptional sub-Lawrentian pieties ("For love is an opening, an outward thing / but the need for love is a hunger that no food will fill"), are impressive. They can be fierce and tender in a swing of moods which combines artfulness and intuition:

*I was believed!*
*Something fell from my face with a clatter—*
*my punishment was over*

*and in that moment*
*fell from my mother's face a particular smile, a kind of*
*dear and tender curling of the eyes*

*fell.*

This is beautifully paced—the verse movement which falls into "fell"—but Jeni Couzyn has always tended towards the exclamatory, and consciousness of a mission seems recently to have hardened her art into what reads like crudely simplified transcripts of an appeal to sisterhood. Her rhythms have become strident, and there is too much stuff like this:

*Infinite! That surely is the secret name*
*the unimaginable, the immense mystery!*

*No. That is the sacred name for Within.*

*Is it Nothingness?*

*It is not. That is the lie of Reality.*

*Truth?*

*Truth is what it says.*
*Truth is the name for itself.*

Such vacuous rhapsodising could only have been written by an admired poet who is listening to the hush of her audience, an audience which believes her to be writing from what Elizabeth Barrett Browning called "the depths o womanhood." This is a phrase which Jeni Couzyn picks up in her interesting introduction to *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Women Poets*.[5] Here she expresses her debt to that true poet Kathleen Raine, whose influence can clearly be seen on a number of the poems in *Life by Drowning*, and praises her for having "steadfastly refused to be drawn into the spiritually impoverished cul-de-sac of 'clever' poetry that has dominated literary fashion in Britain for most of her writing life." The trouble is that Jeni Couzyn now seems to be prescribing too conscious an antidote to what she sees as cleverness, and in this she is being untrue to her talent. "The message of the man is linear . . . // But the message of the women is love,/has always been love . . . ."

Messages, messages. Fine, but I don't want a poem to *tell* me this ten times over. There was a singular time when Jeni Couzyn's poems managed to prove it.

ANTI CLEVERNESS is a theme in Anne Stevenson's autobiographical contribution to the Bloodaxe book. "Much of what passes for poetry these days seems to me trivial, self-regarding games-playing: cleverness for cleverness's sake—or for the poet's sake. But I no longer want to play the literary game. I had enough of that in Oxford."

Good. She's settled into a Durham village now, so it's therefore perhaps time for some valedictions. Nevertheless I'm puzzled and disappointed to find her devoting the last eleven pages (rather a lengthy postscript) of *The Fiction-Makers*,[6] her otherwise excellent new collection, to a whimsical appropriation of Villon in her "A Legacy: on my fiftieth birthday." The less said about this the better, but something must be said. It's witty, I suppose, nice for her family and friends, and full of in-references for the fashion-mongers, but who really cares that she intends to leave

*To Andrew Motion, any fame*
*That to my thin books may adhere*
*Like sheep's wool to a barbed-wire name.*
*Further, my reputation for*
*High-flown frigidity to Fleur*
*Who in the Oxford lists has been*
*The lady aptest to prefer*
*The acid to the saccharine.*

Tart and affectionate enough but—for all its playful self-effacement—too much a symptom of the cleverness it purports to be saying goodbye to. For an apparently voluntary exile Anne Stevenson still seems addicted to court news.

That's less than half the story, though. Almost without exception, the rest of *The Fiction-Makers* is absorbing. In a tribute to Elizabeth Bishop, "Waving to Elizabeth", Anne Stevenson has her admired poet say, "This high smooth sea's more quiet than the map is,/though the map, relieved of mapmakers, looks imprisoned and free." Here an American ghost meets and merges with a British one as those last three

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[4] *Life By Drowning: Selected Poems*. By JENI COUZYN. Bloodaxe Books, £5.95.

[5] *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Women Poets*. Edited by JENI COUZYN. Bloodaxe Books, £12.95; paper £5.95.

[6] *The Fiction-Makers*. By ANNE STEVENSON. Oxford University Press, £3.95.

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words recall Edward Thomas's wish to stand "fixed and free" in a rhyme. *The Fiction-Makers* is preoccupied with map and sea, form and flux, the shifts of perception and memory, and with states of being locked in and out of language. Like Bishop and Thomas in their different ways, Anne Stevenson is becoming a haunted but companionable solitary for whom landscape, the otherness of animal nature, and the intimate habits of friendship both accentuate and alleviate her sense of isolation. Other moving tributes to dead friends—Frances Horovitz and Anne Pennington—have a clear beauty as she notices the things they would have noticed and remakes their own fictions.

Language locks her into a loving circuit of celebration. When she's locked *out* it's by the inescapably human humdrum, the domestic, but with an engaging wit she manages to celebrate this too. Prompted by affection for a noisy son practising his drums upstairs,

> *The woman in her burrow*
> *looks up to him, boasting and fussing.*
> *But her mind broods lonely*
> *on the sands by a tidal river.*

That burrow is Anne Stevenson's well-earthed cave of fiction-making, and the more she holes up in it the more attentive she becomes to the idea of a real world beyond it. In "A Prayer to Live with Real People"—one of a sequence of "Black Grate Poems" (also handsomely available from the Inky Parrot Press, with delightful illustrations by Annie Newnham[7])—she prays to her household gods to save her "from Habitat and snobbery and too damn much literary ambition." *The Fiction-Makers* shows her settling into a "new life" with all her ghosts around her. Most of them are on her side, as real as the locals she wants to adopt. If she can completely kick the poetic Habitat habit, the inverted literary ambition with its eye cocked towards fashion which still shows in "A Legacy", her next book should be better still.

RICHARD MURPHY'S WORK is an interesting blend of the sensuous and the austere. *The Price of Stone*[8] is an elegant, highly crafted collection, full of contrivance and patches of very fine writing. It doesn't leave a poem unturned, but too great a sacrifice of material to the demands of construction tends to make a stone of the art. Although the first half of this book contains some fine lyrics, Murphy keeps getting weighed down by artifice. In "Stone Mania" he writes of "the house whose construction has kept us entirely apart." This is addressed to a loved one who has had to pay the price of the poet's "passion for building in granite"—a passion which throughout the collection he insists on exploring as a metaphor for the craft of verse—but it also draws attention to a procedure which keeps him apart from his reader. One keeps watching for the next appearance of "a wise old

[7] *Black Grate Poems*. By ANNE STEVENSON. The Inky Parrot Press (Oxford Polytechnic, Headington, Oxford), £9.50.

[8] *The Price of Stone*. By RICHARD MURPHY. Faber, £4.00.

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ISBN 92-2-105162-5 **£10.00**

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mason", "the stonework of my heart", "each random stone made integral", etc., and rather distantly admires the rhetorical expertise.

The entire second section is a sequence of fifty sonnets in which Murphy traces his lineage and growth as a poet by means of giving a voice to buildings which have had significance in his life (birthplace, school, a friend's cottage and so on). There's a lot of indomitable Anglo-Irishry in this. It's an extremely enterprising project, packed with cunning effects which keep drawing attention to their own literary ingenuity—"to renovate my structure", "plucking lost tunes from my structure", "made me sound in my ruins", "he restored my site." "Much as you need a sonnet house to save/ Your muse . . ." begins "Carlow Village Schoolhouse."

That sounds rather desperate. It's as if the schoolhouse may have Murphy's number. At times, along the way, as yet one more building bent the ear, I felt that I needed another sonnet like a hole in the wall. It's all so literary, consciously poetic, and rather *vieux château*. Yet what a powerful descriptive gift Murphy displays when he's not labouring on the construction site. In "Morning Call" two girls are

> *Lovely as seals wet from fishing, hauled out on a rock*
> *To dry their dark brown fur glinting with scales of salmon*
> *When the spring tide ebbs. This is their everlasting day*
> *Of being young. They bring to my room the sea's iodine*
> *odour*
> *On a breeze of voices ruffling my calm as they comb their*
> *long*
> *Hair tangled as weed in a rockpool beginning to settle clear.*
> *Give me the sea-breath from your mouths to breathe a*
> *while!*

THE SECOND BOOK of Peter Reading's latest collection, *Ukulele Music*,[9] is entitled "Going on." And on and on as the ship of ghouls goes down:

> *plinkplinka/plinkplinka/plinkplinka/plinkplink/plinkplinka*
> *plinkplink*
> *plinkplinka/plinkplinka/plonk//plinkplinka/plinkplinka/*
> *plonk*

How scrupulously he observes the caesura as all around him lose their heads very nastily. With what sardonic relish he catalogues the tabloid horrors of our time—and of all time, *H. Sap.* being what he is.

Giving the two fingers to "poetry wallahs" in mockingly accomplished classical metres, Peter Reading has made a considerable and deserved reputation for himself as a writer who ransacks the columns of historical documents, foreign correspondents and, above all, "last week's dailies before they're / screwed up to light the Parkray." His imagination is thrilled by the worst to be found in newsprint, and he's brilliantly in control of the end of his tether. Call his poetry compassionate after its terrible fashion and it answers "plinkplinka." Call it callous and not a little voyeuristic and it calls back "*C'est la vie*. Plonk plonk":

> *"Life is too black as he paints it" and "Reading's nastiness*
> *sometimes*
> *seems a bit over the top" thinks a review—so does* he.
>
> *Too black and over the top, though, is what the Actual*
> *often*
> *happens to be, I'm afraid. He don't* invent *it, you know.*

I know he don't. I'd have to be suffering from a very acute case of Podsnappery indeed to think for a moment that he did.

What troubles me ("Hooey and hooey and tosh" or not) is just that Peter Reading makes an aesthetic of cruelty while soundly disclaiming any moral consequences for his skill. He's an on-stage dandy of destruction, slashing his lurid, undeniably authentic canvases with so much vigour that the act becomes self-generating. There's little doubt that he's going to go on playing to full houses. The danger is that he'll become an institution. "Let's go and see Peter Reading tonight." If that happens I'm not sure that it won't be down to him. With his ever increasing brilliance of organisation and the same awful material, he may just be becoming too spectacular for our own good.

JOHN GOHORRY'S POEMS are often abrasive but always good-natured, and *A Voyage Round the Moon*[10] is an enjoyable first collection by a bright-and-breezy realist. Playful, unencumbered by his considerable learning, wryly nostalgic though seldom indulging in false sentiment, Gohorry persuades us that intelligence brings its own rewards. He can sustain lengthy commentaries on art and manners with a robustness of rhyme and metre in the best Jonsonian tradition, and even comes close to pipping Pope at the post:

> *Alma before her mirror sits*
> *applying the dear counterfeits*
> *that prolong youth and banish age*
> *to some unthinkable last page*
> *of Revlon's catalogues or hardly*
> *probable collapse of Yardley . . .*
>
> **"let beauty paint her mortal parts**
> **with all the cosmetician's arts**
> **not to conceal the body's dross**
> **but show the soul in all its gloss**
> **infinity of light and wit,**
> **more truthfully because of it."**

Clever though he often is—not in the "Oxford poetry" sense but in the tradition of true scholarly wit—Gohorry's best poems achieve a gentle, unembarrassed candour. In "Family Resemblances" he recalls how his father used to carry him, as a small child, on his shoulders. Now he carries his own son in exactly the same way and addresses the ghost

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[9] *Ukulele Music*. By PETER READING. Secker & Warburg, £3.95.
[10] *A Voyage Round the Moon*. By JOHN GOHORRY. Harry Chambers / Peterloo Poets, £4.50.

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of the one through the other, a *familiar* enough theme in more than one sense of the word but John Gohorry handles it well:

> *My diminutive, dear, and alas dead father,*
> *I carry you on my shoulder through the high ferns*
> *of our afternoon walk, your stomach a two month*
> *laboratory*
> *of scarcely perfected experiments, your eyes,*
> *if the textbooks are right, still perceiving*
> *conifers, oaks, and the clambering family*
> *you are just beginning to know yours, but can't*
> *name, bizarrely inverted. One of them climbs down*
> *into the fork of a treetop, adjusting*
> *a lens in her stomach, and lifts it down*
> *to her eyes in some escapade that will capture*
> *these seven others and yourself ranged like squirrels*
> *on a massive, collapsed oaktrunk.*

This mixture of scientific curiosity and private tenderness is typical of Gohorry's spirit of human enquiry.

William Scammell is another Jonsonian poet. His energetic wit is less cloistered than Gohorry's and in much of his work we find him with his sleeves rolled up in the School of Life:

> *Starved of my proper diet, I broke fast*
> *and hungered round the city, swallowing down*
> *a hundred films, plays, concerts: periphrast*
> *by night, by day a cipher in the town.*
> *In weeks I'd shed my background; see, at last*
> *a haughty traveller on the underground!*
> *storming the citadel, by very force*
> *master of every modish intercourse.*

Scammell has become a readable critic in the literary journals where his intercourse is refreshingly anything but modish, and in his third collection, *Jouissance*,[11] there are some lively observations on the literary life, and particularly on the world of popular culture. A poem like "Ancient and Modern" is a roll-call of yesterday's men and women who still cast their glamour on his imagination, but the best poem in the book is a very plain, very quiet one written in memory of Pete Laver who was curator of the Wordsworth museum and library at Grasmere and a good poet himself:

> *Pete dropped baldly on Scafell*
> *walking one minute, dead the next*
> *at an age neither biblical*
> *nor glossed by any text.*
> *It dins in our ears, crumples the eye.*
> *It steals a day from its normal perch.*
> *It grabs the legs from under pay*
> *thinning a voice to fill a church*
>
> *where all's one voice, or would be, were*
> *there comfort in a shared defeat,*
> *anything new to be read in terror,*
> *wisdom in getting to your feet.*

So much contemporary poetry seems polarised between the purveyors of mere conceit and the honourable possessors of grave, ineffectual concern. In his first collection, *The Interrupted Dream*,[12] Tim Dooley seems to lean towards the latter. He goes in for an Arnoldian sobriety laced with echoes of Larkin:

> *What feels like a gasp out of the nineteenth century,*
> *a "let us be true to one another" flung in unbelief*
> *at sea, signifies hope that small trusting creatures*
> *can learn or live sharing. We touch to that rhythm*
> *and glance indoors at the ephemera of love, collected.*

Dooley's breadth of reading and consciousness take in internationalism—two sections of the book are prefaced with epigraphs from Neruda and Jaccottet—but his sensibility remains provincial. Like so many provincials he is nicely ironic about his position but it remains a rather lame one: "Holding a glass of cider and a Penguin Mallarmé/I pose for a leisured life while there is work to do."

Faber's latest *Poetry Introduction*[13] is worth getting hold of for the poems of Alan Dewar. He certainly doesn't waste a moment scribbling in the margins while there is work to do. His muscular rhythms and admirably compressed lines embody the industrial activity and landscape about which he writes. He's no elegiac observer of abandoned machinery. There's a heartening anger and political nerve in his work:

> *Forget those time-softened mills,*
> *forget the quiet renewals*
> *spilling power through the race.*
> *Ignore the sadness, entropy*
> *of solar silence dimming*
> *on our bright panels. Look:*
> *sky is the black of absence.*
> *The firth is like mercury.*
> *Against the water, complex black*
> *steels and concretes cluster.*
> *Waste flares off, fierce worklight*
> *is fired at the groundplan.*
> *Roads bend in like lines of force;*
> *are gridded into service,*
> *spiralling round towers.*
> *Matt blocks absorb*
> *material, transform.*
> *Kiln of the great anarchy.*

A pamphlet of Dewar's work is already available,[14] but Faber should sign him on for a full collection immediately.

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[11] *Jouissance*. By William Scammell. Harry Chambers / Peterloo Poets, £4.50.

[12] *The Interrupted Dream*. By Tim Dooley. Anvil Press, £4.50.

[13] *Poetry Introduction 6*. Faber, £3.95.

[14] *Geometry*. By Alan Dewar. The Danby Press (Department of English and Drama, The University, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3TU), 50p.

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# Books Encountered

**The Price of the Ticket: Collected Non-Fiction 1948-1985.** By JAMES BALDWIN. Michael Joseph, £14.95.

Fifty-two essays, one from this magazine, many previously uncollected, and including "The Fire Next Time", "No Name in the Street", and "The Devil Finds Work." Together, they crushingly document the indignities and outrage of an unrelenting witness, protagonist, and prophet.

**The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980.** By ROLAND BARTHES. Translated by LINDA COVERDALE. Cape, £25.

Useful, agreeably translated, but unindexed and confessedly incomplete collection of Barthes interviews, with some grainy photographs. Less of an Everest than his collected writings; some of its foothills are tame, even for neophytes.

**On Signs.** Edited by MARSHALL BLONSKY. Basil Blackwell, £27.50, paper £8.95.

Spritely illustrated anthology of writings on semiotics by Barthes (including a brief interview omitted above), Eco, Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, et al., proving that the science of signs can be fun, and unliterary—as well as, in places, stupefying.

**The Everyman History of English Literature.** By PETER CONRAD. Dent, £16.

Quirky, allusive, highly intelligent "chronological interpretation" of Eng. Lit. from *Beowulf* to Seamus Heaney, webbed with cross-references and pausing for controversy. Caviar to the well-read General: caveat to the enlisted man.

**Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention.** By PAUL JOHN EAKIN. Princeton University Press, £28.

Fiction is lying, autobiography truth? Vice versa, of course. Professor Eakin rather pompously reveals fictional elements in memoirs by Mary McCarthy, Henry James, Jean-Paul Sartre, Saul Friedlaender, and Maxine Hong Kingston. He could have hunted bigger game.

**From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America.** By SHELLEY FISHER FISHKIN. Johns Hopkins University Press, £23.50.

In essays on Whitman, Twain, Dreiser, Hemingway, and Dos Passos, Dr Fishkin shows how reporting helped shape writing. Neatest point: the *Kansas City Star*'s style sheet's influence on Hemingway's prose. Dreiser's teachers were less good.

**On Writing and Politics 1967-1983.** By GÜNTER GRASS. Secker & Warburg, £12.

More appealing on writing than on politics; but the latter invades the former, only sometimes with reason. The travelling recalls Sartre-de Beauvoir political tourism, if with a more open mind.

**Messages: A Book of Poems.** Compiled by NAOMI LEWIS. Faber, £7.95.

A modern child's garden of (at least half) modern verses, including some poems previously unpublished, and two by the editor. After Anon., always prolific, the most frequent contributors are Emily Dickinson and Stevie Smith.

**Strindberg: A Biography.** By MICHAEL MEYER. Secker & Warburg, £25.

Mammoth, worthy, perhaps definitive study by Strindberg's best-known English translator, full of illustrations and new material; kinder than Olof Lagercrantz, noticed here last November but not in Meyer's select bibliography of helpful works.

**Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India.** By MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE. Oxford University Press, Delhi, £15.50.

Pioneer conspectus of 19th-century fiction in Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, and Assamese, perforce based on translations of all but the first three. It homes in notably on *Pather Panchali*, *Godan*, and *Samskara*, and gracefully shows how realism had to adapt to India.

**The Long Poems of Wallace Stevens: An Interpretative Study.** By RAJEEV S. PATKE. Cambridge University Press, £25.

Learned, illuminating analysis of seven long poems, with sidelights from shorter works, showing very precisely how they construct a "world" which releases the author from "incessant beginnings" and into his larger self.

**The Development of Samuel Beckett's Fiction.** By RUBIN RABINOVITZ. University of Illinois Press, £19.25.

Another "world", only apparently absurd or unrealistic. Beginning with the unpublished *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and concluding with *Watt*, Professor Rabinovitz shows comedy and despair as one. "The harshness of existence makes even tragic gestures futile."

**The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James.** By JOHN CARLOS ROWE. Methuen, £20.

Mr Five by Five? No: a depressingly "relevant" approach to the Master, strong on deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, phenomenology, poststructuralism, *und so weiter*. When it climbs down from theory it's quite good on the works.

**David Low.** By COLIN SEYMOUR-URE and JIM SCHOFF. Secker & Warburg, £9.95.

A sad, wd politico-biographico-aesthetic study, with 153 illustrations, to fit the current Low exhibition (National Portrait Gallery until January 12, then Newport, Nottingham, and Hull). See "Low and Lord Beaverbrook", by Adrian Smith (ENCOUNTER, December 1985).

**Queneau's Fiction: An Introductory Study.** By CHRISTOPHER SHORLEY. Cambridge University Press, £25.

The first full-length monograph in English on Raymond Queneau. Those who admire him in French may smile more knowledgeably after reading it; those who don't may remain baffled and inquisitive.

**The Everyman Companion to the Theatre.** By PETER THOMSON and GAMINI SALGADO. Dent, £15.

At the opposite pole to Peter Conrad (see above), a painstaking and reliable (if not always up-to-date) reference book in the stalwart Everyman tradition. But do stalwart everymen still exist?

**Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860.** By JANE TOMPKINS. Oxford University Press, £22.50.

Two-gun attempt, by a "committed" critic, to rehabilitate popular or political books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, at the expense of masterpieces like *Moby Dick*. What next, Professor? *God's Little Acre*?

**Orwell: The War Commentaries.** Edited by W. J. WEST. Duckworth/BBC, £14.95.

Processed, not vintage Orwell: his scripts for other speakers broadcasting to India. Admirably edited as a companion-piece to *Orwell: The War Broadcasts*, plus Axis propaganda to contrast them with, they nevertheless lack Orwellian bite.

**Walt Whitman: The Making of the Poet.** By PAUL ZWEIG. Viking, £14.95.

Professor Zweig's last, posthumous work, enlarging on Dr Fishkin's Whitman chapter (see above), and exploring the transformation of a political journalist and humdrum writer, a late developer at thirty. There's hope yet.

*R.M.*

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*Raymond Tong*

# St John and St Anselm

Grinning derisively from the twin towers
of the Church of St John and St Anselm
the gargoyles mockingly survey
the empty cans, the paper and discarded cartons,
the battered headstones and neglected graves.

A few years ago St John
and St Anselm, like the nearby
Mount of Olives, still remained a church.
Now it is used by the youthful unemployed
who take part in activities arranged
by Arts Opportunities Limited,
while the Mount of Olives is a Fitness Centre,
where unconcerned with spiritual longing
the faithful seek only the health of the body.

Doubtless St John, a shadowy mystic,
should he ever come this far north,
would gaze sadly at "our beloved father"
beneath a broken cross, at "dear mother"
pathetically askew in the long grass.
Yet absorbed by ineffable divinity,
having long ago witnessed the light
shining in the uncomprehending darkness,
he might be consoled that the building
is put to a seemingly useful purpose.
Quietly departing he might murmur:
"I have seen this happen before.
Soon there will be a new beginning."

But surely Anselm, stubborn Norman saint,
reluctant archbishop to an evil king,
would react in a manner less quiescent.
Loving the English as he loved his Church,
having spent much of his life struggling
successfully against the power of the State,
he would turn away in obvious anguish.
Then oblivious of the traffic he would go
striding instinctively towards the Cathedral,
shouting angrily through his tears:
"My people, has it come to this?
Have you forgotten who you are?
Do you no longer care?"

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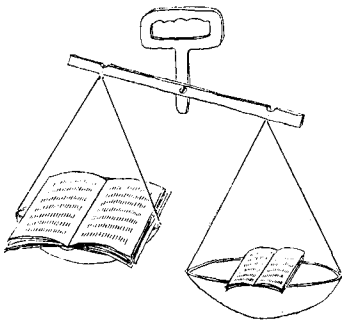
# Waugh & Peace Revisited

## *Russian Readers, Western Writers—By* TERESA CHERFAS



RUSSIANS HAVE a voracious appetite for foreign literature, for it is one way of getting a slice of "bourgeois life" that is otherwise unattainable, except, of course, by trusted citizens who are permitted to travel to the West.

One official outlet for foreign writing in Russian translation is the monthly journal *Inostrannaya Literatura* (*Foreign Literature*). In August 1983 it published an extract from the British television series *Yes Minister*. There is no doubt that a circle of well-informed foreign-literature editors have an eye out for what will please their readers; and the Soviet publication of *Yes Minister* was a good choice from contemporary British fiction for a nation of readers reared on Gogol's satires of absurd officialdom and bureaucracy in pre-Revolutionary Russia. The continuity into the Soviet period is not lost on them. However, in their selection, Soviet editors must bow to the dialectical dictum that in Soviet literary criticism content is of greater merit than form alone. In their vigilance not to create a situation in which the more probing reader could find suggestive Soviet parallels in the work of a foreign author, the editors of *Inostrannaya Literatura* decided to publish the extract not in the "general fiction" section of the magazine, but under the rubric "Writings about Current Affairs." If this did not adequately make the point, a 2½ page introduction by deputy-editor O. Vasiliev drove it home. He explained to the readers that the subject of this satirical exposure is the stagnant decrepitude of Britain's governmental institutions, and the mediocrity of her civil servants with all their grotesque paper-pushing. *Yes Minister* is classified as the latest in a genre which also includes Keith Waterhouse's novel *Office Life* (1978), of which Vasiliev writes:

> "Not only is the absurd vanity of the office-workers' routine, writing memos and filling out forms, depicted in a grotesque way, but the anti-humanism of the 'affluent society', depriving thousands of people of intelligent, socially useful work, is laid bare. . . ."

Vasiliev does not conceal the fact that *Yes Minister* started life as a popular BBC television series. Nor does he conceal the reason for this being allowed to happen.

> "The British ruling class has got the knack of 'letting off steam' down to a fine art. That is precisely why a measured critique of the existing departments and institutions was permitted to be shown on the screen—just so long as it did not touch the foundations of the bourgeois state or order."

Vasiliev informs his readers that Britain's "army" of civil servants wields enormous influence, and that although English ideologues and propagandists like to extol the so-called impartiality of senior civil servants, a process of meticulous vetting ensures that they are more "blue" than "pink" and positively recoil from anything that smacks of "red." British national security interests can tolerate no ideological deviants in the Civil Service, and (he continues) membership of the Communist Party constitutes deviant behaviour. In case all these observations are not immediately apparent in this extract of *Da Ministr*, Vasiliev confirms that authors Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay were not attempting an all-embracing critique of the System but had settled for an accurate portrayal of a British government minister's "domestication" by senior civil servants.

The message is plain. In "bourgeois politics", whichever party you vote for, the Civil Service always gets in.

WITHOUT SUCH A preface, *Yes Minister* may well not have been selected for publication in the USSR. But despite the sometimes lecturing tone of its editorial comments, *Inostrannaya Literatura* subscriptions are highly prized in the Soviet Union, and with a "restricted" edition of 418,000 copies (for a population of 270 million) the demand far exceeds supply. On the other hand, *Kommunist*—"the theoretical and political journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union"—is printed in an edition of 944,000 copies and costs a mere 25 kopeks, compared to the one rouble 80 kopeks for *Inostrannaya Literatura*. It's all a question of priorities.

The idea of a "Best-seller List"—and they even use the word "*byestsyeler*"—was borrowed by *Inostrannaya Literatura* to describe its readers' "TOP TEN" foreign prose works for 1982-83. They include some surprising titles. The favourite was Irwin Shaw's *Beggarman, Thief*, followed by Christopher Priest's *Inverted World* (science-fiction and fantasy novels are very popular in the Soviet Union). Next came James Jones's *Whistle* and Graham Greene's *Doctor Fischer of Geneva or the Bomb Party*. A certain Gordon



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Parker's *Pool* was No. 5 (the biographical note on him tells us that he is an English writer, a polytechnic graduate in nautical engineering who now works in a factory). Joyce Carol Oates's short story "Holy Matrimony" was next, followed by Johan Bargum's *The Dark Room* and Waclaw Bilinski's *An End to the Holidays*. Bargum is a Finnish author and playwright who writes in Swedish; and Bilinski, a former prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, is a "Laureate of the Polish People's Republic." Finally came Emma Smith's *Opportunity of a Lifetime* and Truman Capote's story "Handcarved Coffins: A Non-Fiction Account of an American Crime" (from an anthology of his writings entitled *Music for Chameleons*). Just bubbling under were Ursula Holden's *Penny Links* and Keith Waterhouse's *Office Life*. The *Yes Minister* diaries were not even mentioned, and yet it got the highest rating from British readers. It is not so much a question of cultural differences in humour, but the fact that (as one Soviet reader observes) the sections on Current Affairs and Criticism are the kiss-of-death to a writer since few people read them, and such contributions are usually left to other, more topical journals.

THE SAME READERS, asked whose works they would *like* to see translated in *Inostrannaya Literatura*, came up with an altogether more familiar list of names: Kurt Vonnegut . . . Graham Greene . . . Peter Ustinov . . . Iris Murdoch . . . William Styron . . . John Fowles . . . E. L. Doctorow . . . Günter Grass . . . Gabriel García Marquez . . . Colin Wilson . . . Barbara Pym. These authors are also published in the Soviet Union, but are rationed out, thinly sandwiched between the excellence of *world* literature, overlooked in the West and represented by countries ranging from Cuba to Greece, India to Syria, Viet Nam to Nicaragua.

NOT EVERY ISSUE can give equal space to the translated literatures of all these countries, but in a section called "From Month to Month" the balance is partially redressed. Here one can read about the cultural high points of the past month as they occurred in Kenya, Mongolia, Peru, the United States, Tunisia, Great Britain, China, France, Austria, New Zealand. . . . In the February 1985 issue, the USA's entry concerns "Harry Belafonte's Comeback" and his "partisan war against Hollywood." The column quotes an interview with Belafonte (in the *International Herald Tribune*) in which he says:

> "If a producer has 5 million dollars and the choice between a black film and a white film—he'll put the money into the film with white actors: in Hollywood they know that blacks go to films with white actors, but very few whites go to films with black actors. . . ."

Naturally, the column does not have sufficient space also to mention the 22-year-old black star Eddie Murphy, who is the flavour-of-the-month in Hollywood if the "bourgeois press" is to be believed (*The Standard*, London, 11 March 1985). Murphy does not seem to differentiate between "black" roles and "white" roles: he wants to remake the Chaplin classic *The Kid*, taking the star role for himself. Better to stick with Harry Belafonte's analysis of "Hollywood racism" than probe into the success story of yet another black star millionaire.

Kenya's entry for February 1985 is given almost as much space; and note that Tunisia has a new National Organisation for Cultural Affairs.

SPOILT FOR CHOICE their readers may be; none the less, as the editors of *Inostrannaya Literatura* themselves point out, eight of the ten "*byestsyelers*" belong to the English-speaking world.

Astounded by my own ignorance of some of these Russian-English best-sellers, I went to my local library in Primrose Hill where I found a copy of Emma Smith's *Opportunity of a Lifetime* (1978). Much was explained in the blurb:

> "Nora was fifteen. It was just before the outbreak of World War Two. She was staying for ten days of a Cornish seaside holiday with her fiercely rebellious sister, Cynthia, and her embittered impoverished middle-class parents in an old beach café."

A bit of class, a bit of conflict: it sounded promising.

> "Money and property, reflects Nora, were the twin gods that ruled her childhood, in pursuance of which the ethics of right and wrong, good and evil, became a confusing nonsense. . . . Nora at last has begun to understand that . . . her experiences were a manifestation in personal terms of a much larger and still continuing struggle between two conflicting moralities. The reader is made to see that in the '70s the conflict hasn't basically altered, only intensified."

So there it is: "the iron logic of self-interest" under Monopoly-Capitalism exposed, the Class Struggle laid bare, the inexorable dialectic set into its laws of motion.

By no means all works of contemporary fiction lend themselves so easily to categorisation of this type. John Braine, John Wain, Evelyn Waugh, A. N. Wilson and Angus Wilson, Melvyn Bragg, Susan Hill, Fay Weldon and Margaret Drabble have all been published in the Soviet Union. But, more often than not, a Soviet introduction to the work will point out to the reader that one or another aspect of social collapse, human alienation, moral weakness is being depicted here, thus heralding the final disintegration of Britain's social fabric. In just such an introduction to the Russian publication of Ursula Holden's *Penny Links* (1981), the translator was surprised (when he met the author in London) at her modest enquiry as to why in particular *her* books had been chosen for translation. He praised her literary style and believable heroes, and remarked:

> "Ursula Holden is in that category of writers which directly or obliquely deals with the Second World War. As is well-known, the process of the disintegration of the British Empire was considerably hastened with the conclusion of that war. Once again England was 'an island, nothing but an island' and internal social problems set in in the first instance. Changes in the psychology and way of

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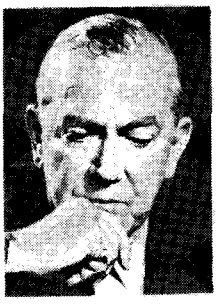
life of Britons are reflected in the literature; for example, David Storey, John Fowles, Margaret Drabble, Emma Smith—'children of the war' who do nothing out of the ordinary but in whose sorrows and griefs, in whose inability to fight their own circumstances or change their way of life, can be felt a genuine sense of the dramatic, which is not pessimistic."

That a work be "not pessimistic" is the editors' ultimate demand, and if it is deemed to have passed this arbitrary test for appearing in print, the door is open to a variety of themes and experiences whose universality can transcend the social, historical and geographical strait-jacket which constrains them in their Soviet publications. Where the subject-matter is less tangible, however, Soviet editors may find that it is better to keep within areas they already know to be inside the safety zone, for it is they who are held responsible if errors of judgment are made.

Arthur C. Clarke, many of whose sci-fi books have been translated in Soviet journals, surely seemed a safe enough choice for the editors of *Tekhnika-molodezhi* (Technology for Youth). A serialisation of *2010* was begun in 1984, but was abruptly broken off (*not* "to be continued". . . .) when evidently someone pretty high-up tumbled to Arthur C. Clarke's hidden jibe—he had given his fictional Soviet cosmonauts the names of real-life Soviet dissidents![1] Not only does Arthur C. Clarke not appear again in subsequent issues, but the editor-in-chief, V. D. Zakharchenko, was replaced by an "editorial board", and the annual index published in the December 1984 issue of *Tekhnika-molodezhi* has

[1] Orlov, Kovalev, Rudenko, Yakunin, among many others.

## *The View from Greeneland*



GRAHAM GREENE *may not have been the first outstanding Western writer to make a fool of himself over the Soviet Union, but perhaps he is the only one still at it.*

*In an interview with the Soviet "Literaturnaya Gazeta" (17 October 1984), he made some revealing remarks:*

**"He suddenly asked [reports the interviewer]: 'Tell me, where is Greenland? . . . It's the only place in the world I have never been to. . . . I was always drawn to those countries where the political situation involved a game of life and death. . . . I was always interested in turning-points and found them in Asia and Africa, in Central and Latin America. Literature, you know, helps the fight against dictatorial régimes and I did what I could to contribute to this fight.'"**

*Evidently, in his literary peregrinations, not all dictatorial régimes qualify for Greene's anti-dictatorial struggles.*[1] *He did not show much interest in the "gulag" as an institution which surely involved "a game of life and death." But in his time he has expressed some eccentric thoughts about all this. He once said that he would much prefer to wind up in Russia rather than in the USA. More recently, he gave a somewhat tortuous explanation of "what he had meant" in the "International Herald Tribune" (8 March 1985):*

**"It was meant to be an ironic remark. I would end my days quicker in Russia than in California, because the Russians take writing seriously, so I would soon find myself in a *gulag*, which is in a way a compliment to a writer. Whereas one might drag out one's years in California in some backwater."**

*This, however, is not a reflection which Greene shared with his "Literaturnaya Gazeta" interviewer. To him he only explained that his life on the French Riviera was not all that easy; that he earned just enough to make ends meet, that for this he had to work every day. . . .*

*Not uncharacteristically, in the one place he expressed his great "admiration" for his friend Philby; whereas in the other (the "Herald Tribune") he simply described him as "a traitor for a cause he believed in." For the Soviet audience he rhapsodised:*

**"We both fought against fascism. . . . And naturally when his book appeared in Moscow, I wrote with pleasure the introduction to its English edition."**

*Greene may still be concerned with the power and the glory, but clearly he was never very eager to consider seriously the idea of being paid the ultimate writer's compliment—a stretch in the "gulag." He prefers to hold fast to his sentiments from Antibes. The last expression was one of approbation for Gorbachov "from the bottom of my heart" ("Literaturnaya Gazeta", 6 November 1985).*

*Graham Greene was a mere 22 when Lincoln Steffens—he who said of the Soviet Union: "I've seen the future and it works"—explained (in a letter written in July 1926) why he had chosen to live and write on the Riviera rather than work for "the future" in Moscow:*

**"I am a patriot for Russia; the future is there; Russia will out and it will save the world. That is my belief. But I do not want to live there."**[2]

*A few years later, the 74-year-old George Bernard Shaw visited Russia, saw only happy workers, and found Stalin to be "a very pleasant man" busy with successful five-year planning. Shaw was furious with "the lies, lies, lies and more lies in the bourgeois press." He reported that "I saw nothing disagreeable in Moscow" (this is 1931!) and confessed:*

**"If eighteen, I'd stay; but I'm too old to change my domicile."**[3]

*More than half-a-century later, with all the dismal historical experience that has been recorded since Lenin's time about how the vaunted future really works, and what the real facts are about Shaw's "greatest actual fact in the world", Moscow is still somehow a beacon light.*

*From a distance. Preferably from the Riviera.*

***Leopold Labedz***

[1] See David Pryce-Jones's sensitive analysis of Greene's Torrijos/Panama book, *Getting to Know the General*, in the February 1985 ENCOUNTER.

[2] Lincoln Steffens, in Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims* (1981), p. 64.

[3] "A Good Fabian Fallen among the Stalinists", by David Dunn, *Survey* (No. 123, 1984), p. 20. Shaw's Fabian pragmatism led him to the dramatic formulation: "Soviet Russia is the greatest actual fact in the world."

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no recollection of Arthur C. Clarke or of *2010* at all. Down the Memory Hole in 1984. . . . The new editor-in-chief is a certain S. V. Chumakov, who should be more vigilant about science-fiction in a land of scientific socialism.

There is often a considerable time-lag between a book's publication in the West and its publication in the Soviet Union, suggesting some hesitation over vetting in the "twilight zone" of literary content. There was no problem in publishing an extract from Paul Harrison's *From Inside the Inner City: Life Under the Cutting Edge* (1983)—it came out in *Inostrannaya Literatura* within a year of being published in Britain—while Peter Benchley's *Jaws* (1974), a less ascertainable commodity, took almost ten years to appear in Russian. In February 1985, *Inostrannaya Literatura* published the first instalment of E. R. Braithwaite's novel *To Sir With Love* (first published in 1959 in London).

The editors claim to be hampered in their search for literary "landmarks" by a generally noted stagnation in world literature, especially in Europe and North America. This argument was given credibility by Gore Vidal in his address to the Writers' Union of the USSR in Moscow. He bemoaned to his audience of Soviet writers the disappearance of the English literary language. The "only way" now that a writer in America can hope to be read is if he finds himself on a university course list. Genuine literature in America is a rare phenomenon, but there is all the commercial mass-appeal literature you could wish for. "Who is to blame for this?" Vidal asks, and promptly answers his own question:

> "Why, paradoxically enough, it is you Russians. When you launched the first 'Sputnik' into space, Eisenhower took such fright he gave all the funds to the scientists so that they could set about overtaking the Russians. As a result, the arts were left without the necessary means, English faculties were impoverished, and America was left with no real literature."
>
> *Inostrannaya Literatura*, No. 4, 1983, p. 237.

For translators the problem of selection is compounded by the proliferation in modern Western writing of bad language, slang and sexual explicitness. J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) created something of a sensation when it was published in Russian in 1960, and that was during Khrushchev's "Thaw"! They've come a long way since then if Fay Weldon, the feminist "virago" and chronicler of sexual manners and mores for our times, is among the writers now being published. However, she was asked by her translator to remove some of the more offensive passages from *Female Friends*, which she dutifully did ("it's just like it was in Britain 30 years ago!"), only to discover that she had been far too zealous with her blue pencil. The "sex" was fine in any number of (heterosexual) combinations, but Russian readers weren't yet constitutionally quite up to reading about menstruation. Evidently, they will not be publishing *Puffball*, whose vivid, factual descriptions of internal female biology give the novel its life-blood: Fay Weldon is no faint-hearted feminist. Like John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* and *Couples*, *Puffball* cannot be translated because of its "naturalism."

But if certain of a writer's books are too "naturalistic" for Russian tastes, this is not sufficient reason to neglect other, more suitable works by the same author. Two out of the three books in Gore Vidal's "American Trilogy" (*Washington D.C.* and *Burr*) have been translated into Russian, and the third (*1876*) is in preparation. But *Myra Breckinridge* is an "unnovel", and one would have to be a privileged sort of Soviet reader even to know of its existence. Where political sensibilities are offended, the pattern is the same. John le Carré's *A Small Town in Germany* was published in the USSR, but the books featuring stoical Smiley, the Soviet mole-catcher, are not available, although they may be mentioned. In an article called "The Spy with Tears" their plots were recounted in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*; and last May's issue of *Inostrannaya Literatura* (No. 5, 1985) has an analytical article about *Smiley's People*. As for le Carré's most recent novel, *The Little Drummer Girl*, it was given the full Soviet treatment. In two issues of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Nos. 20/21, 15/22 May 1985) the plot was anatomised for Soviet readers. The *Litgazeta*'s editorial preface to the two extracts introduced le Carré's book in this way:

> "The novel is interesting for its precise description of the positions and methods of Israeli Intelligence, and thus also of the English and West German Special Branches. This comes as no surprise since the author is a former trained officer of British Intelligence. The scenes of torture, blackmail, psychological manipulation of prisoners with the help of special drugs, seem to have been drawn from life. Evidently the author has observed them not just in the torture-chambers of *Mossad*, in so far as similar things (as our paper recently reported) are practised even now by some West European Special Branches."

Oleg Bitov, who "chose freedom" by defecting to London and then opted for "the homeland" by re-defecting to Moscow, may well (as *Literaturnaya Gazeta*'s notorious "victim of British Intelligence") have "told all" to his old editors and readers. The preface continues:

> "In his novel, le Carré is far from any thought of criticising *Mossad* for the crimes it has perpetrated. On the contrary he praises its agents. However, what was dreamed up as a spicy dish for the sated bourgeois reader today reads like an impressive piece of self-exposure."

The extracts published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* were cobbled together in such a way as to distort and misrepresent the plot of le Carré's book; they certainly gave the impression that he supports *Mossad* unequivocally at the expense of the Palestinians and the PLO.[2]

The BBC's Russian Service interviewed John le Carré about this episode of "literary piracy" (in an interview broadcast in Russian to the Soviet Union on 2 June 1985). Le Carré expressed his indignation and annoyance at his own and his novel's treatment in the Soviet press: "It is about the same as

[2] See, in Encounter (June 1976), Julius Telesin's documentation of a case of censorship: "For whom the scissors cut: How to improve Hemingway (Moscow style)."

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being publicly called a murderer, a thief or a criminal. . . ." Le Carré stressed that *The Little Drummer Girl* was a work of fiction whose aim was to show that "bloodletting leads to new bloodletting. . . . And while a compromise between extremist views and extremist positions has not been reached, people will kill and torture one another, and by these very acts betray and soil their own ideals." Far from being written from first-hand experience, *The Little Drummer Girl* "is just a novel which shouldn't be taken in the spirit of Socialist Realism." That spirit is, as is well-known, obsessively literal-minded. Had le Carré's novel been "about a Moscow prostitute, would the author of the preface have dared to suggest that [le Carré] was the proprietor of a brothel in Moscow?" Now that really could pose a problem for Kremlin ideologues.

Meanwhile, the Cold War has frozen out Margaret Drabble's *The Ice Age*. Her imaginary East European state of Walachia is nothing if not "pessimistic." With its camps, its Party bureaucracy, its sombre and barbaric atmosphere ("'They don't have bail, or proper trials or Tampax, or anything civilized. . . .'"), Drabble's imaginary People's Republic is too rooted in a "Soviet-type" reality to be pased fit for Soviet consumption. As for Saul Bellow, Russian readers are said to have "no interest in Jewish New York." The Chicagoan Bellow is not published at all in Russian. (He has been published in the languages of the Baltic Republics—Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian—but these are accessible only to a minute proportion of the Soviet population.) However, Bellow's work has been discussed in Soviet literary articles, and his name may certainly be favourably mentioned. In an interview in *Inostrannaya Literatura* (January 1985), Norman Mailer includes Bellow as one of the "top three living American writers." (The other two are John Updike and, yes, Mailer himself.)[3]

Indeed, Soviet editors, critics and, by implication, readers profess to have "no interest" in quite a large number of things and themes. And when they do, they tacitly agree that the subject has no "relevance" for *their own situation* but tells them all they need to know about life *over there*. Still, the social criticism implied in many of the Western novels published in the Soviet Union is not easily contained, and it invariably strikes a chord among a readership denied such self-critical outspokenness in its own contemporary literature. Western authors evidently have to perform the function of social criticism not just for their own societies, but also as a kind of literary "support system" to undernourished readers abroad.

No matter how they are ideologically packaged, European and American literary works published in the Soviet Union provide "a window on the West" that Russia's editors, critics and readers would be reluctant to see closed (even if it might be "a window of vulnerability"). If it is to remain ajar, all must profess to believe that the Grass isn't Greener on the other side.

[3] Since Mailer was an honoured guest in the Soviet Union, he was also the subject of the "From Month to Month" entry in January 1985. Quoting from *Time* magazine's review of *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (1984), *Inostrannaya Literatura* informed its readers that this latest novel of Mailer's was not, as might be expected from the title, a parody in the style of "Real Men Don't Eat Apple Sauce [Quiche]" or "Dead Men Don't Wear Checked Suits [Plaid]", a specious display of pseudo-sophistication which could hardly have meant anything to the Russian reader.

## For the Spring Term

*(for Katy)*

Snow took shape in the streets that Sunday
Like an embryo, fleshing the pavements and trees.
I thought of you driving to Bristol

(Your textbooks and clothes packed tightly in
The boot) and resorted to postcards again. My
Close handwriting fills them like footprints,

Turning the white into slush! Every
Night, the continental quilt bubbles and bulges
And my breath freezes on the window.

Your turquoise sweater blooms at the tips
Of my mother's needles—she is fussing about
The size as it drifts to completion.

While the sun does next to nothing I
Scrape ice from the doorstep. For now, I am toasting
Your absence in Perrier water.

*Stephen Knight*

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# POINTS OF THE COMPASS

## The Ideological Pilgrims

### . . . and now to Managua—By PAUL HOLLANDER

THE APPEARANCE of my two ENCOUNTER articles as a special pamphlet[1] provides a welcome and compelling occasion for reassessing the extraordinary phenomenon of "political tourism." Now from the vantage point of four more years (since the first edition of my book on *Political Pilgrims*[2]) a great deal more can be said about the "ongoing" manifestations of ideological pilgrimages. Although the overall volume and frequency appear to have declined, and the countries chosen by the pilgrims for their destinations have changed, the fundamental impulses giving rise to the *Wanderlust*—the quest for the Revolution, for El Dorado or the "Fortunate Isles", or for the idealised societies which profess to adhere to (or are intent on introducing) some form of Marxian socialism—have endured. In turn, the tendency to idealise such countries and the political movements which won famous victories and "took power" springs from the persistence of alienation or cultural estrangement and, in general, from the prevailing adversarial attitude in Western societies.

Is this being a shade too topical? After all, the patterns were first discerned in the 1920s, including the most bizarre misperceptions of certain far-away countries induced by the favourable predisposition of the wide-eyed travellers and the highly organised efforts of their solicitous hosts.

How, and why, has it happened again? What circumstances have combined to replicate and revive a grotesque and embarrassing chapter in Western intellectual-political history? What still motivates the reverential journey to highly repressive societies on the part of educated Westerners, all beneficiaries of considerable political freedom and material well-being?

Although by the early 1980s the movements and causes of the turbulent 1960s were no longer vital or prominent, the attitudes associated with them have not disappeared. Even after the "*Me*-decade" (as American writers have called it) there was still a great deal of residual ideological energy, and a propensity to radical social criticism among large segments of the population, e.g. academic intellectuals, the liberal clergy, the media people. There was, in short, a substantial reservoir from which *bien-pensant* sympathisers of some revolutionary régime or other could be drawn.

"Sandinista" Nicaragua has, in the last few years, emerged as the new destination of political tourists who appear to be yearning for a sense of purpose and community and who are eager to show their personal solidarity with a system that has once more claimed "true socialist" credentials. As a participant in the recent debate over the portrayal of Nicaragua noted in the pages of the Left-wing *Nation* (1 June 1985):

> "Nicaragua offers a defeated American Left a vicarious taste of revolution, a symbolic issue. . . . The debate in *The Nation* shows that in many cases American leftists are talking not about Nicaragua but about their own projections."

Ronald Steel, the historian, writing in the symposium occasioned by the offending article (it evidently fell sadly short of the sympathy required by many readers of and contributors to *The Nation*), detected an historical parallel:

> "The Left for the most part romanticized the Vietcong because it sentimentalizes revolution. What it did in Vietnam it is doing again today in Nicaragua. The Sandinista régime is far from exemplary and has at best a mixed record on civil liberties. Why should it be dishonourable for those who cherish such liberties in the United States to say so openly?"
>
> (20 April 1985)

It could be that the sympathisers saw in the Nicaragua drama a happier replay of the 1960s in the United States (or Western Europe). A reporter in *Playboy* Magazine caught the spirit of the Managua "scene":

> "Here was a place seemingly run by the kind of people who were sixties radicals. Wherever we went, people were young, singing political folk-songs and chanting '*Power to the People!*' One night there was even a Pete Seeger concert in town! . . ."

Elsewhere the leaders of the Sandinista régime were described as "Rock 'n' Roll Rebels" who were "into baseball, beer, and Bruce Springsteen."

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[1] *Pilgrims on the Run*. By PAUL HOLLANDER. ENCOUNTER Pamphlet No. 16, £2.00, $3.50. Available from 59 St Martins Lane, London WC2N 4JS. Add 50p. ($1.00) per copy for postage

[2] *Political Pilgrims*, Oxford University Press (London and New York), 1981.



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In the past as in most recent times, political tourism was stimulated primarily by domestic conditions (i.e. of the country where the tourists came from) rather than the irresistible and self-evident attractions of the country visited. It is perhaps for this reason that—as two former radicals (Peter Collier and David Horowitz) put it—"Epidemics of *radical chic* cannot be prevented by referring to historical precedents." Some kind of domestic crisis, or a surge of local discontent, always played a greater part than the true and known virtues of the newly-discovered land where social justice reigned and history found its fulfilment. Thus the pilgrimage to Nicaragua arose as a protest against the Reagan Administration, reflecting the age-old attitude: "My enemies' enemies are (or must be) my friends." If Reagan's America was strongly opposed to that Sandinista government, they must be doing something right and reasonable, and surely deserve our support. Such was the basic motivation of the most recent generation of political tourists. Moreover, not only was Reagan a public enemy of the Nicaraguan revolution, he also stood for everything his American and Western European critics despised: an unabashedly pro-capitalist attitude, a simple patriotism, an insistent commitment to increase American military strength, and a set of middle-American values blended with touches of Hollywood and Madison Avenue public relations.

I must add that the choice of Nicaragua reflected the declining prestige or downright discrediting of other political systems which had earlier been revered by other political tourists. Where had all the other flowers gone? By the early 1980s the Soviet Union had long ceased to be a destination of Western pilgrims, eager to see "the new experiment" in how to create a more humane society. China lost its dedicated following after Mao's death and the horrific revelations, and the drastic policy changes that followed. While dramatic disillusionment with Cuba was not widespread, it too ceased to be a fresh model of political rectitude. Castro's glamour also gradually faded away as large numbers of Cuba's citizens fled in waves from time to time, and because of its chronic economic problems and its persecution of "decadent elements" (including avant-garde writers and homosexuals). Ho Chi Minh's Viet Nam, now united, produced the "Boat People" and displayed imperial ambitions and a total disregard for the welfare of its population. Hanoi opted to maintain a bloated military establishment rather than make any serious attempt at growth and economic advance. While Communist North Viet Nam and its guerrilla Viet Cong fighters might have been easy to romanticise during the war, by the early 1980s few Americans or West Europeans could bring themselves to admiration, and such political tourism has virtually dried up. There were exceptions. They included a US church group which was taken in 1983 to a model prison-camp and found it quite as praiseworthy as the hosts intended. There were not unsimilar visits to model prisons of Soviet design in the 1930s.

Further, David Dellinger, a leading American anti-war activist and one of the famous "Chicago Seven", went on record in the *Los Angeles Times* (5 May 1985) to express his enduring affection for that régime. He noted after a recent visit: "Except for Nicaragua, it's the most liberal and non-Stalinist form of Communist society"; and he registered his unhappiness with what he considered "the overly cynical view about the repressiveness of the Vietnamese government" among Americans.

In such a climate of ideological opinion the emergence of a revolutionary Nicaragua could not have been better timed. Here was a small country which had earlier been "a colony of American imperialism", run by a corrupt Somoza family dictatorship, and at long last redeemed by an authentic, popular revolution after years of heroic insurgency. The new régime came complete with a youthful leadership, grizzled guerrilla fighters, and liberation-theology priests. There was something for everybody. Even Manhattan feminists could admire Nora Astorga (the youthful and handsome deputy foreign minister), who was celebrated for helping to trap and liquidate a Somoza general in her bedroom.

No doubt the image of Nicaragua as the victimised, underdog country bullied by powerful Yankees has greatly added to its appeal. Correspondingly, for many Americans it inspired the same kind of guilt-complex, that famous We-Are-All-Guilty feeling, as had Viet Nam. The New York socialist leader Michael Harrington wrote:

> "I came back [from Nicaragua] far more ashamed of my country than at any time since the Viet Nam war. The Nicaraguans are a generous people, a poor and often hungry people, who want to make a truly democratic revolution and it is we who work to subvert their decency. . . ."

Hence there was an instant community of ideological interest between American critics eager to discover a new, authentic socialist régime, unburdened by the mistakes and associations of the disenchanted past—Russian, Chinese, Cuban—and the Sandinista authorities, intent on influencing American public opinion by creating favourable and politically useful images of the new Nicaragua.

I MUST CONFESS that when I had finished writing my book about *Political Pilgrims* I did not think that I would, so soon, be prompted yet again to ponder the phenomenon of political tourism. After all, the massive and prolonged misapprehension of the nature of régimes such as the Soviet, Chinese, Cuban, and North Vietnamese has become a well-documented, if painful, subject. The gradual realisation that organised deception and spontaneous self-deception produced fairy-tale images of these societies surely promised to put an end to the recurrence of Utopian images.

I was seriously mistaken, as it turned out. I had underestimated the tenaciousness of "the will to believe", the inability to learn from history, and above all, the depth of that hostility toward American (and Western) society which, time and again, predisposes certain groups and individuals to idealise "alternative political systems." The fantasy is evidently irrepressible. Can the folly be endemic?

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# AUTHORS & CRITICS

# A Dictionary?

## *Marxism from A to B*—By SIDNEY HOOK

WHATEVER the connotation of the word "dictionary" there are at least two things that those accustomed to English usage have a right to expect in any volume characterised as a dictionary—objectivity and accuracy. The two are not the same. A book may lack objectivity, be one-sided, prejudiced and still accurate in the details it presents. This volume[1] is neither objective nor accurate—not does it possess the degree of comprehensiveness a dictionary should possess. Were the editors not well-known scholars occupying academic posts, one would suspect that this project was undertaken to cash in on the growth of neo-Marxist thought (much of it quite different from, and incompatible with, doctrines traditionally associated with the thought of Marx and Engels) and the general revival of interest on the Left in Marxism.

Lack of objectivity in a work on Marxism is usually an expression of political bias. But I am unable to locate the source of political bias on the part of the editors although it is quite clear in the writings of some of the contributors. Since the editors declare their gratitude to the contributors for "the care and thought" of their entries and for "their responsiveness to editorial suggestion", they must take responsibility for the sins of omission as well as commission.

To begin with the evidence of lack of objectivity. By chance the dictionary opened to the entry on "HEGEL AND MARX." This is a theme which I happen to know something about, having published the first and only book in English on *From Hegel to Marx* in 1935 (it appeared in two editions and was widely distributed; Gollancz was the publisher of the English edition). The relatively brief account by Iring Fetscher claims that among other Hegelian influences is the singular importance of the Hegelian dialectic on Marx's *Capital*, in seeming disregard of Marx's statement that he had "coquetted" with Hegelian terminology and his assertion that he was applying scientific method to the study of political economy. This confusion of Marx's view that the mode of economic production is the independent variable in historical change, with the Hegelian view that it is the organic totality of the whole social process reflected in the mode of production is incompatible with the theory of historical materialism. Reversion to an Hegelianised Marx is not unusual when evidence that falsifies the theory of historical materialism comes to light. I have discussed this point in my criticism of the Frankfurt School and of latter-day epigoni of Marxism unhappy with the empirical evidence that some of Marx's central economic and political predictions have been decisively invalidated.

Still, there is room for wide differences of interpretation on the nature and extent of Hegel's relationship to Marx. One would expect the bibliography appended at the end of the entry to list my *From Hegel to Marx*. It is not there. I assumed that this was an oversight by the author and/or editors. I then turned to the general bibliography of other works on Marx and Marxism cited in all the entries. It consists of some 1500 works. Not only is my *From Hegel to Marx* not cited, my *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (New York and London 1933), *The Ambiguous Legacy: Marx and the Marxists*; *Revolution, Reform and Social Justice*; *Marxism and Beyond*—and a score of other volumes in which I have discussed some aspects of Marxism—are unlisted. Particularly significant is the absence of my *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*, which called attention to certain pragmatic components in Marx's theory of knowledge later independently developed by John Dewey. Bertrand Russell and John Strachey told me, and others, that when the book appeared it had a substantial influence in England.

Even if my views were regarded as "un-Marxist" or otherwise unsound this surely should not justify the systematic policy of exclusion. After all even in the Soviet Union I am listed in the bibliographies as "a falsifier of Marxism" and have been told that my name is almost a household word among those properly educated. There was no reference to me not only in the general bibliography but even in the index of the book. I then discovered that other American scholars who have made notable contributions to the discussion of Marxism are also unlisted in the bibliography, although what they have published is relevant to many topics in the dictionary—Max Eastman, Lewis Feuer, Edmund Wilson, Lewis Corey, Daniel Bell, and Louis Boudin (who is known not only for his eloquent defence of Marxism from the ramparts of orthodoxy in his *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx* in pre-World War I days, but

[1] *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Edited by TOM BOTTOMORE. Editorial Board: Laurence Harris, V. G. Kiernan, Ralph Miliband. Blackwell, £29.50, paper £7.95.



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also for his scholarly and original economic interpretation of the American Constitution). Much more can be said for Boudin's approach than for that of Charles Beard, whose economic interpretation, based on data that have been challenged, was influenced more by Bentham's doctrine of self-interest than by Marx's theory of the effect of economic *conditions* rooted in the mode of production.

THERE MAY BE some justification for omitting political figures like Eugene V. Debs, Norman Thomas, and William Z. Foster, but certainly not for Daniel De Leon whose call for the organisation of "Industrial Councils" as the legislative centres of socialist society contained the embryonic concept of "Soviets." One also wonders at the absence of any mention of Abba Lerner, the outstanding Keynesian scholar who together with Oscar Lange elaborated the idea of "market socialism"; or of Theodore Draper whose impressive *History of American Communism*, ably continued by Harvey Klehr, has few, if any, parallels for comprehensiveness and objectivity in the histories of other Communist Parties. One looks in vain for an entry on the colourful and fascinating L. Fraina whom Lenin called "the first American Bolshevik" after exonerating him from charges that he was a government agent. Fraina was one of the organisers of the American Communist Party and more than a decade later under the name of Lewis Corey wrote the first influential Marxist book on the Depression, the massive *The Decline of American Capitalism*. Instead of an entry on Fraina, there is a mystifying reference to him in the article on literature.[2]

For a moment I was tempted to explain the exclusion of so many Americans who were eligible for entries, and the apparent censorship of even their writings, as a consequence of the possibly anti-American animus of the organisers of the project. But then how explain the presence of minor American figures like Paul Sweezy and Milton Fisk among the contributors, and references to the works of other Americans?

It would be safe to say that the editors are probably Leninists of a sort, but hazardous to explain the inclusion and exclusion of persons and books in terms of that ideological persuasion. Perhaps the long and short of it is the incompetence and ignorance of the editors. Only ignorance, barring political prejudice, can excuse the failure to list Bertrand Russell's remarkable book *The Theory and Practice of Bolshevism*, written in 1920, in which with amazing prescience he foretold the degeneration of the Bolshevik programme of social regeneration in consequence of the barbarous means pursued to achieve it. More serious, however, is the carelessness of the editors in approving of some of the contributions.

I have selected two key movements and two key figures to appraise both the usefulness of this dictionary and the competence of its editors. The two movements are STALINISM and LENINISM; the two figures are BRECHT and LUKÁCS.

The account of Stalinism offers a conventional analysis of Stalin and his régime from a Khrushchevian perspective. The terms "Stalinisation" and "Stalinist" since 1956 have been given "a loose and highly perjorative meaning" according to Ralph Miliband. This may be true outside the Soviet Union, but certainly not within the Soviet Union during recent years. The "de-Stalinisation" movement was stopped cold when the rivers of revelation about the extent and intensity of Stalin's Terror gave rise to demands that justice required some punishment of the millions who participated in manning the engines of repression. The fascinating question on Marxist principles of how Stalin could have wielded absolute power without the support, if not complicity, of the Communist Party itself, is not explored. The historic context of Stalin's rise to absolute power is mentioned but not the responsibility of the socialised collective system which made it possible. Nor is the non-Marxist decision to "build socialism in one country alone" related to Lenin's own thinking. The author contends that the "relationship of Stalinism to Marxism has been the subject of fierce controversy." He fails to state between whom the controversy rages. For orthodox followers of the Kremlin, both within and without the Soviet Union, the continuity from Marx to Stalin is a matter of faith. Many conservatives agree, and to most non-Marxists there is no interest in the controversy.

The real controversy not only among Marxists but among scholarly historians (without a political commitment) of the history of ideas is the relationship of Stalinism to Lenin and Leninism. Here lies the whole crux of the question of the justification of the October Revolution, because if one can establish Lenin's responsibility for developing the theory and practice which Stalin was able to use and abuse in developing his terrorist régime, the Russian Revolution appears in a new light. Bottomore and the Editorial Board should have rejected any entry on Stalinism that shies away, as this one does, from this crucial question.

The entry on Leninism begins peculiarly with an account of how "Bolshevik-Leninists" conceive it, without any attempt to determine whether they conceive it correctly or whether what they say about their relation to Marx is true. We are told that Leninists see Marxism as a revolutionary class "PRAXIS", a term not further explained. All characterisations of Leninism are given in the words of Lenin or his followers.

> "It is an approach to the seizure of power for [*sic!*] and by the proletariat and the building of socialist society, which legitimises revolutionary action by the Party on behalf [*sic!*] of the working class."

Any knowledgeable person knows that this is not the language of Marx, who would have bridled at its paternalistic tone, and the natural question the author of the entry (DSL) should have addressed himself to is how is Leninism related to the thought of Marx? But there is not a line on this. Ironically, the entry on Stalinism is concerned with Stalin's relation to Marx, but the far more important entry on

[2] "Early American writers, such as the American, L. Fraina (on dance, futurism) raised issues which Brecht and others would elaborate . . . ." No bibliography of his writings on these themes is given.

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Leninism is unconcerned with Lenin's relation to Marx. Stalin is considered by many scholars to be undoubtedly Lenin's heir, but was Lenin undoubtedly Marx's heir? Any entry that failed to consider the question and assess its truth or falsity on the basis of the evidence should have been rejected as quite inadequate.

After all there are some obvious difficulties in taking the Leninists at their own word. There is not a line in Marx that identifies "the dictatorship of the proletariat" with the dictatorship of the Communist Party. Rosa Luxemburg was quite right in stressing Marx's reliance on the spontaneity of the workers' uprising, and his expectation that its emancipation would be the consequence of its own activities rather than the work of a saviour Party. Marx referred to the Paris Commune as "a dictatorship of the proletariat" which was certainly not a party dictatorship and neither of, nor by, or for the proletariat. Marx would have regarded the advent of a collectivised society in an economy-of-scarcity in underdeveloped countries like Russia and China as a refutation of his theory of historical materialism. Even narrowly considered, as a theory and practice of achieving power to establish a socialist commonwealth, the Marxism of Marx and Engels is profoundly different from that of Lenin whom they would have regarded as spawned by Bakunin. Even if one is tempted to dismiss this and much more as already well ploughed ground, for the sake of new generations who tend to view the past in the light of present-day parochial traditions, an account of it certainly belongs in a "dictionary of Marxism." Even if the editors of the dictionary were Leninists, they owed it to their readers to establish that Bolshevik-Leninism was a legitimate offspring of Marx.

GEORG LUKÁCS because of his education and training (Heidelberg, etc.) has been considered in Marxist and neo-Marxist circles as more nearly a professional philosopher than any other writer except Sartre (who was a Communist but never really a Marxist). Even Kolakowski pays some tribute to his thought, if not to his character. Despite Lukács's importance the entry on him contains very little illumination about his ideas and why they are or were considered important. The entry divides Lukács's Marxist period into five distinctive phases of activity, in the first of which Lukács did his most original work, especially in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923). His distinctive views he repudiated after they were condemned by the Bolshevik leaders of the Comintern. The author of the entry does not explain what these historical views on philosophy were, and why they were condemned. Mention is made of his other writings in literary criticism and aesthetics but not of the contemptible way he would heel and tack to please the Stalinist watchdogs of Party orthodoxy on socialist realism, anti-modernism, and dialectical thinking. He never uttered a critical word of the Moscow Trials and the terrible purges. Even when he managed to get out of the Soviet Union he acted as an apologist for the Zhdanov line in culture, although he remained suspect. For a brief moment in October 1956 he joined the Hungarian revolutionaries. After the savage repression in Budapest he was deported to Romania and then forgiven, presumably for past services.

What the entry does not say about Lukács is that his undoubted intellectual gifts made it possible for him to write with a calculated ambiguity when he lived wherever Stalin's writ ran; and that towards the end of his career after Khrushchev's revelations, when he felt rather more secure, he forthrightly criticised Stalin, and professed to have always been opposed to Stalinist theory and practice, despite the fact that the surface meaning of what he wrote guaranteed that he would survive.

Even if the author of the entry does not believe that Lukács's writings, composed in the Khrushchevian era, were largely an exercise in self-exculpation, Lukács' claim that during all the years of eager compliance with Stalin's decrees he was an "anti-Stalinist" should have been discussed, as well as Lukács's considered judgment (made in the comparative safety of his final years) that the "worst socialism", including presumably the death camps of the Gulag, was superior to the "best capitalism."

ONE TURNS with some curiosity to the entry on BERTOLT BRECHT after reading the entry on LUKÁCS. Lukács in essence supported the position of Stalin and the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party that modernism in art, literature, and other cultural fields was "counter-revolutionary." Brecht was one of the leading exponents of contemporary expressionism. About Lukács's stature as an original philosophical thinker there is considerable room for doubt. But on Brecht's stature as a literary figure in the theatre there is hardly any dispute. He has been hailed as "one of the great writers of our century in any language" even by those who regarded what he had to say (as well as his character) as detestable.

According to the author of the entry, Brecht "aimed to be the Marx of the post-capitalist, post-subjectivist theatre" but nothing is offered to justify the reference to Marx, except Brecht's wilful, fanatical, amoral espousal of Communism in its worst Stalinist expression. The author ignores the obvious point that Brecht, hoping to find tolerance (if not absolution) for his authentic modernist revolutionary technique that affected the nerves of the Kremlin bureaucrats in the same way as the cacophonies of modern music, always espoused the extremist political orthodoxy . . . except when it involved personal danger. While in the United States he lacked the courage to defy his Congressional interrogators and slyly pretended he had no Communist involvements. At the same time he was canny enough to stay out of the Soviet Union during the period of the Moscow Trials (1936-38) and the purges in which some of his Russian friends and admirers were exterminated without public protest on his part.

Worse than Brecht's silence about the Soviet terror from the safety of the West—he did not have the excuse Lukács had that any protest might prove fatal—was his frenetic defence of the Moscow Trials and his venemous attacks against its victims. This is unmentioned in the entry. Instead we are told that Brecht complemented his anti-capitalist moral vision "with a lifelong study of the works of Marx,

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and to some extent of Lenin." There is no evidence for this. His knowledge of Marx he learned on the fly from lectures by Karl Korsch and other Marxist scholars, from whose "intellectualism" he dissociated himself to glorify the Workers, the Party, the idea of Revolution, and "the dialectic", a shibboleth he used to justify arbitrary judgments.

Brecht really belongs in a dictionary of modern poetry and art, not in a competently edited dictionary of Marxism.

THERE ARE PROBABLY some commendable entries by some writers of merit. On the whole, however, this *dictionary is very disappointing, obviously designed to* exploit current academic market conditions, and hardly useful to anyone who has access to the expository or critical works of the leading scholarly writers on Marxism of our time, e.g. Raymond Aron, Daniel Bell, Isaiah Berlin, Anthony Crosland, Leszek Kolakowski, John Plamenetz, John Strachey and others.

Some harsh critics, particularly if they are sophisticated and knowledgeable scholars of Marxism, may be tempted to regard this *Dictionary* as fraudulent. This would be unjustified, for not only are many entries unobjectionable but those that, for one or another reason, are objectionable can all be attributed to errors of judgment. This includes entries on DIALECTICS that despite, or because of, the use of Marxist jargon are likely to be opaque to the general reader. Thus, aside from the view that by the "dialectic method" Marx meant nothing more than the scientific approach to social, historical and economic phenomena, decked out in terminological Hegelian finery, two other interpretations of dialectics are extensively discussed: the ontological and the relational. But at no point in this extensive discussion does the author attempt to answer a simple question that is likely to suggest itself to the attentive reader. Could there be a proposition or assertion that is *scientifically* true but *dialectically* false, or one that is *dialectically* true but *scientifically* false? If not, what is the point of dialectics or the dialectic method in the theory and practice of *scientific* socialism?

Perhaps the appropriate term to use about this *Dictionary of Marxism* is to say that it is odd, extremely odd. Different readers will find it odd for different reasons. Aside from the *parti pris* that has transformed so many important scholars into non-persons, I find among the strangest things about this extraordinary dictionary the entry on LOGIC. It is odd that the author of this entry should be the Emeritus Professor and distinguished historian of ancient civilisation and economics, Moses I. Finley, not previously noted for his contributions to logic, either traditional or Marxist. It is odd that he was not invited to write the entry on HISTORICAL MATERIALISM, whose method he has presumably been applying in his well-known historical studies. And perhaps oddest of all are the things Sir Moses has to say about logic and its categories. There is hardly a sentence in what he writes of the categories which is not highly disputable. For example,

> "Tendencies determine necessities. But there may be obstacles to realising tendencies. Thus in contrast with the traditional modal relations, necessity does not imply actuality, but at best possibility."

This is strange doctrine not only for an Hegelian but for a Marxist. If necessity is at best a possibility, how could Marx have declared that both the fall of capitalism and the advent of socialism are inevitable? By "inevitable" Marx certainly meant *necessary*; and just as certainly he did not mean only *possible*.

Or consider this sentence in the discussion of technology:

> "It is only within a certain kind of social whole—one in which exploitation serves the privileged—that the existence of the assembly line will arise simply (*sic!*) because it makes disciplining workers easier."

This is strange indeed. One would have thought that, according to Marx, the assembly line arose because it enabled the owners to extract more surplus value from the workers and therefore more profit, regardless of whether the workers could be disciplined or not.

Oddest of all are the sentences describing the strange logical category "Levels of Reality" in which M. I. Finley discusses "base" and "superstructure", the two key concepts in the theory of historical materialism. When Marx claims that the economic base "determines the superstructure of consciousness", Finley explains this by invoking two kinds of determination, without indicating whether these determinations are necessities or ("at best") possibilities.

> "To claim that the superstructure is caused by the economic base as an antecedent stimulus leaves insuperable problems about how there could even be an economic base without a developed system of consciousness [or law, as argued by Plamenetz and other critics—S.H.]. This leads one to attempt to interpret the base-superstructure metaphor by way of the second type of determination. The base is then an economic framework within which a mixture of cultural, political and also economic circumstances can stimulate changes of consciousness."

Sir Moses opts for the second kind of determination without realising that he has converted Marxism into a stupendous tautology in which the economic framework (expanded to encompass the whole of culture) determines culture; or into a *pluralist* theory of historical causation in which the mode of economic production is only *one*, and not always the decisive factor, in determining great historical events. This last view is held by innumerable non-Marxist historians.

The editors should have requested "clarification" and "amplification" of entries that abound in obscurities, contradictions, and needless paradox. One can hardly resist the impression that both contributors and editors, in order to avoid submitting the corpus of Marx's doctrines to the test of historical experience, have performed a lobotomy on it. Indeed, at times one suspects that they have performed a brain transplant with only too evident immunological results.

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# LETTERS

## Winstanley's Precedent

IN PROFESSOR E. J. MISHAN'S article (ENCOUNTER, January) on "Women's Liberation"—a form of liberation which, if successful in its more extreme aspects, will only fasten heavier shackles on those it pretends to liberate—I found much to agree with, and much I would like to comment on further. I will, however, confine myself to what I consider to be the most useful point.

In a footnote to his article Professor Mishan refers to a number of the weaker-minded brethren in the Universities feeling constrained to the use of *he* or *she*, *his* or *her*, etc., and similar absurdities in their writings.

In 1647 a pamphlet was published, entitled *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* and attributed to the Digger Gerrard Winstanley. In this pamphlet Winstanley uses the felicitous phrase:

> ". . . every man both male and female is a perfect creature of himself. . . ."

This is a pleasing thought, a useful usage, and gives a good precedent. If I am questioned on my use of the long-established convention that permits the words *he*, *him*, and *his* to refer to, and include, persons of both sexes, then I am content to justify myself by replying that I use such words in a "Winstanleyan sense." I commend this practice to all weaker-minded brethren in the hope that this will enable them to revert, guiltlessly, to a traditional convention that should never have been questioned. Attempts at the ungainly modification of that which requires no modification merely serve to disclose the ungainly hand of those persons whom Napoleon, rightly, detested—those who are obtuse and industrious.

MOHD RUSLAN ABDULLAH

*Kuala Lumpur*
*Malaysia*

## Kristol's Gunboat

IRVING KRISTOL'S "Warning to Myopic Europeans" (ENCOUNTER, March) appears to me as a very clumsy plea for a US intervention in Central America. Even though the United States might have serious reasons for concern over the political turmoil in the region, its "relative" success in Grenada in 1983 is not a reason to make the countries of Central America the Viet Nams of the 1980s.

Mr Kristol is advocating a return to the gunboat diplomacy of the first Rooseveltian variety, which is his undisputed right. But in so doing, he seems to display more zeal than is really necessary when he addresses, in patronising and, at times, intimidating tone, his European readers. Putting aside his specious argument about Spain and her historic and linguistic interests in the region, when Mr Kristol states that Western Europe has virtually no right to have any Central American policy, he seems to take seriously his past dreams for present realities.

If our world has been all along shrinking since the end of the last World War, then there would hardly be any event in it today that could be immune from the concern of a government if it choose to. The American Republic has long come of age and the days when President Monroe proclaimed his doctrine are but only a distant if not lost souvenir (however much this may displease Mr Kristol). The days have also gone when the United States could still command awe and regard from its Western allies. Moreover, one cannot say that the European powers do not have any stake in the stability of the region since the Community has developed sustained economic ties with the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific area.

If the United States have always had in the past a tradition of intervention in the Western hemisphere, as a matter of Central American policy, I think that James Chace's latest book (*Endless War*, New York, Vintage Books, 1984), is a much more ponderous evaluation of US interests and strategy.

NGUYEN TRONG THUY

*Geneva*

## General Hackett Replies

WAR is not *only* in the mind!

What Professor Geoffrey Best has to say about my *Profession of Arms* in the June issue of ENCOUNTER invites further observation. This is not because I find his review (if it is a review) of my text offensive. On the contrary, the Professor is quite kind, if a little patronising; and his strictures on the illustrations in this book will be widely shared, not least by its author. It was not my own idea to have any illustrations at all, and I was dismayed that those chosen for publication included six or so pictures of the author himself, the whole bunch, in fact, out of which I had said that perhaps one might be included, if thought really essential.

The text, of course, is a republication of the Lees-Knowles lectures given at Cambridge in 1962, modestly updated, with some more said about the American experience and an additional chapter on "Leadership." This last Professor Best dismisses as "tacked on", which makes me wonder if he actually read it, since so many who did have called it the best thing in the book; they are probably right.

Republication of these lectures, more than 20 years later, would not have occurred but for "Shy" Meyer. General Meyer, a truly outstanding officer by any standard, was Chief of Staff of the US Army at a time when it was just beginning to show signs of recovery from the Viet Nam trauma. I was in Los Angeles when his emissaries picked me up, on a virtual hijack, to visit him in the Pentagon, where he wanted to know if I had thought of republishing this text. I said I had not. "I wish you would", he said. "It would be helpful to me in what we are now trying to do." The lectures had received wide attention in the US when first published, the US Army having printed 50,000 copies from the London *Times* edition and circulated one to every regular Army officer. Oddly enough, I recall, I received no royalties from this. The US Army Attaché in London had solemnly told them in Printing House Square that "material of this sort was always made available between Allies *gratis*"—as though it were an official training-manual and not the painful product of private midnight oil—and someone speaking so confidently in Printing House Square was, of course, believed.

When I found out, years later on, how widely this work had become known in the US I was astonished. At West Point it was already a standard text; at the US Air Force Academy they recently told me that in 17 consecutive courses it had been "required reading"; from the US Army War College at Carlisle I heard that it had what they called there "a cult following." So I did what General Meyer wanted. I spent a few weeks at the Military History Institution at Carlisle making some amendments and then sent the manuscript off to publishers in London and New York who were asking for it; and that was that. I say no more about the pictures.

BUT I DO HAVE GENTLY to help Professor Best, at a point or two, back on to the rails. He chides me for confining myself largely to the military institutions in Europe and North America. This, however, is what I best knew about, from service under arms for more than half of the Psalmist's allotted



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span of threescore years and ten. The Professor will not need reminding that three university lectures of normal length do not permit the lecturer to wander very far. What is widely needed, of course, is a comprehensive historical and technical examination of the whole of that activity which has absorbed more of man's efforts over the millennia than anything else at all—that is, the business of fighting other men. It would be a very long work—12 vols? 20?—and would have to cover the military manifestation wherever and whenever it appeared. The Assyrians would be there; the Mongols, the Celts in so many guises, the Aztecs, the North and South American Indians, the Samurai; the fighting men of the Indian subcontinent, of Australasia, of China, of Africa and Asia, of the chilly North and the sunburnt South; and so on.

An opus of this size and scope would be for one person a whole life's work—and more. For a man has to be a practitioner to write upon such serious matters with authority, just as a surgeon must have more to his elbow, however deep his theoretical interest in medical ideas—if he is ever to be taken seriously as a surgeon.

To help the Professor's argument on its journey *ad absurdum*, I must add here that only last week I had quite a long letter from a man who told me that I had hardly mentioned the Zulus at all!

The art of war is not learned overnight. By the time a man has sufficiently qualified as a practitioner at appropriate levels for his judgment to deserve respect he is unlikely to have enough time left to research and write all those volumes. War, of course, is not only in the mind. Imagine the rich belly-laughter rumbling around Valhalla at the very thought of that! Warfare, battle-fighting, the military condition, the whole bag of tricks is of such compelling interest, however, that it has attracted speculative minds among non-practitioners to a degree unequalled in any other sphere of human activity. There are bustling ant-heaps today all over the world, in which busy little workers are holding conferences, symposia, colloquia, and seminars, pouring out papers, reports, theses, books and every sort of analysis of the activities past, present and future of Military Man. A mere glance at the bibliographical periodical entitled *War and Society News-Letter* (in all the years I have been receiving this I have never really understood that title), whose development owes so much to Professor Best, will show something of the huge size and vast proliferation of what has become a major industry.

Dr Johnson did not know which he found more daunting—streets full of soldiers accustomed to plunder, or garrets full of scribblers accustomed to lies. Well, not all soldiers plunder and not all scribblers lie but his point remains.

I do not hold it essential for the military commentator to have followed a full military career. Professor Best in his two years' national service in the Royal Army Educational Corps must almost certainly have acquired experience of the military condition useful to him in his later academic work, if somewhat limited in scope. Many other military commentators have had even less.

Where he does go rather wrong here, however, is not so much in suggesting that my own picture of the military life is a happy, carefree one, or even "cosy"—is 35 years under arms, a war or so, with much fear and a few wounds thrown in, likely to lead to the conclusion that military service is "cosier" than, say, a snug professorial study?—as his failing to take in a point I make most strongly. He talks of gaudily-dressed military officers, no doubt professional brothers of my own, behaving atrociously, notably in South and Central America. What my lectures invite (p. 134) is to abstain from judging

## *Greek to You?*

*Athens*

WHEN GREEK *starts becoming all Greek to Greeks then there's a problem.*

**At least it seems that way to seven distinguished Greek writers—including a professor of linguistics and a Nobel prize-winning poet—who have banded together to form the "Greek Language Group" that aims to preserve the wealth and expressiveness of the Greek tongue.**

*The group sounded a warning that the language of Homer and Plato, the initial vehicle of Western civilisation, is now being enervated and reduced to an insipid Newspeak under the twin blows of political faddism and sloppy media usage.*

**In a recently-published book the group contends that the worst damage to the 4,000-year-old Greek tongue took place after the Colloquial, or Demotic, form of modern Greek was legislated into force in 1976.**

THE BEST-KNOWN MEMBER *of the Greek Language Group is poet Odysseus Elytis (Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980). Another member is Yiannis Deyannis (a judge who gained fame in 1975 by presiding over the trial of former dictator George Papadopoulos and his regime associates).*

**It is one of the many ironies of modern Greek history that it was the general reaction against the Colonels' use of the antiquated "katharevousa", or purist mode, of Greek that encouraged Left-wing reformers to try to eradicate all echoes of ancient Greek from the national usage.**

*But the process has gone too far. The language has lost much of its ancient and Biblical wealth. Rules of grammar are abused by modernists who believe the fewer rules there are, the better. Syntax has all but disappeared. And public servants work under a literary reign of terror lest they should inadvertently use some word or phrase considered* **"archaic."**

ONE EXTRAORDINARY SOURCE OF **pollution in the linguists' estimation is the influx of foreign words and phrases under the pressure of the modern avalanche of technology, to which Greece has been particularly receptive in the past 30 or so years because of its abrupt transition from a Balkan agricultural to a modern European consumer society.**

*In this period, shops in Athens and many smaller towns have given themselves face-lifts. All but a few proud proprietors seem to have disowned the Greek alphabet entirely in favour of imitations of European names, often done in French-style calligraphy. The observer is hard put to find the name of even one fashion boutique, for example, written in Greek. The same applies to patisseries and to purveyors of jewellery and cigarette lighters.*

*French, in fact, has come to dominate the automotive and much of the clothing industry.*

*English, of course, has taken over in management and in*

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*any* profession by the behaviour of the worst people in it. Look, rather, at the opportunities it offers to the very best, the *megathumoi*, the great of soul. There have been plenty of those among military men, over the ages. Quite as many, perhaps, as you will find among military scribblers.

JOHN HACKETT

*Coberley Mill*
*Gloucestershire*

## Facts & Fictions

SIR KARL POPPER'S PHILOSOPHY is threatening. If he is only partly right, two generations of professional philosophers have wasted their careers. He has also attained such eminence that he has become fair game—a "mark." One can get away with attributing almost anything to him—as the examples of Feyerabend, Lakatos, Kuhn, and now D. C. Stove all illustrate. Thus the story has been circulating for years in the ancient chatterhouses of Oxford and Cambridge that Popper is a liar: that the "poker story", his account of his encounter with Wittgenstein at Cambridge is fabricated and that (contrary to what Popper claims) Bertrand Russell was not even present. Yet the *proof* that Russell was present is available in the Russell Archives in Canada in the correspondence between Russell and Popper about the meeting. In my biographical research on Popper I have been able to determine that Popper's account is accurate in all its details.

While Stove does not repeat this particular legend in his fairy-tale (ENCOUNTER, June) about Popper and contemporary philosophy of science, the *level* of reflection about science pervading it can be shown by just two examples.

"Almost any drongo", Stove writes, "can do 'normal science'." I wish we had more of these drongos (Australian for idiot, so I am told) in America. We are on the verge of losing our microchip market to the Japanese because our own highly-trained engineers cannot master the requisite engineering. Our cars fall apart; our doctors misdiagnose and misprescribe; and 90% of what is published in our scientific and learned journals is rubbish, chiefly based on misreadings and elementary mistakes. Anyone who reads carefully knows this. All Western economies are endangered by the shortage of people who can do normal science—a shortage that makes our intellectual productivity depend on a relatively small number of competent people who are under constant attack, here as in England, from drongos. Thus the Senate of one of the California state universities has just repudiated "Merit awards", arguing that such awards are "inappropriate in an academic environment which thrives on collegiality rather than on competitiveness."

Yet "we", Stove also informs us, have now learnt *how to learn*. We have learnt nothing of the kind, and it is this sort of pretence to knowledge that is the target of Popper's entire theory of knowledge. Learning is very much like increasing one's wealth in other respects. And we haven't learnt how to do that either.

The connection here is indeed not widely appreciated. The central concern of epistemology, and of the theory of learning, is the growth of knowledge. But this makes it a sort of branch of economics: it must seek to understand the expansions and the contractions, the booms and the slumps, in the production of knowledge. Hence it is also a branch of the theory of institutions, for some institutions foster the advancement of learning and the creation of wealth whereas others inhibit this. Thus institutions, knowledge, and other forms of wealth are closely connected; and our educational institutions and traditions are vitally important to our

---

*the physical sciences. A young advertising-account executive, for example, sitting at a* **taverna** *(itself a foreign acquisition) will talk nonchalantly of the* **gallop** *his firm carried out through a national polling agency, or the present* **marketigk** *strategy under consideration in which the* **stori** *line of the* **kampania** *must be credible, or the whole effort will* **krach.**

THERE SEEMS TO BE **no credible way to stop this massive cross-pollination. The military dictatorship of 1967-74 tried half-heartedly to eradicate foreign words from the language, on the model of the French campaign against "Franglais", but no one listened. It was, and still is, just too prestigious to be linked with a foreign language, no matter how badly it is misused.**

*Some proprietors seem to have the idea that the mere transliteration of a Greek name into the Latin alphabet automatically makes it English, or French, or whatever. Such as the old building on Kanari Street near Kolonaki Square that proudly advertises "The Bank of Antics". (Antiques is what the owner meant.) The state is also guilty in this matter. How often have we been mystified at road signs saying* **"Athina . . . Thiva . . . Korinthos"**, *when any foreign traveller would immediately be at home with the standard Athens, Thebes, Corinth; or when the imminence of the Bulgarian frontier is heralded as* **Vulgaria**?

**A professor of linguistics at Athens University, George Babiniotis, says the literary sword of Damocles now hanging over writers' heads in the form of official disapproval should be lifted. "It is time that linguistic terrorism should stop, exercised as it is, as a rule, by ignorant or semi-ignorant amateurs of the science of language."**

ANOTHER WORRIED WRITER, *Stelios Ramphos, protests that a person's way of using suffixes of noun declensions has become a badge of political affiliation, with Conservatives sticking to the traditional noun endings and Left-wingers using simplified ones.*

**The Greek language has been a main ground for their political battles for more than a century. The two modes, the Purist and the Demotic, were quickly recruited for the eternal Right-Left battle. Matters took an ugly turn early this century when the attempt of an extreme demoticist, Alexander Pallis, to translate the original Greek of the New Testament into Demotic caused rioting in the streets of Athens and the fall of a government.**

THE CONFLICT SIMMERED *up until 10 years ago, when the convoluted (and quite incorrect) purist mode used by dictator Papadopoulos helped discredit the whole usage even in conservative minds. The first democratic government after the fall of the Colonels' dictatorship promptly legislated Demotic as the national language.*

**The Greek Language Group is now trying to correct a trend that they see is going too far in the other direction. Where woolly meanings were a problem of Purist Greek, the same problem crops up in Demotic, compounded by politics.**

*John Carr*
*in* THE ATHENS STAR

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national wealth. Effective institutions themselves embody knowledge and incorporate innovations; and knowledge (and institutions) are themselves forms of wealth.

Thus certain societies are poorer than others *in that* they lack certain institutions, and are hampered by those that they do have. This makes the problems of knowledge production also partly ecological: how to foster institutions and traditions in which intellectual fertility, as well as criticism and competition, can be nurtured. Thus, just as the theory of learning merges with economics, so do both of them merge with ecology and the theory of institutions.

Now slumps in knowledge production often occur; and institutions that inhibit learning are common in our culture. As far as most academic disciplines are concerned, we are in the midst of such a slump right now; and that slump is largely due to the organisation of those disciplines themselves. Economic slumps are aggravated by government regulation and anti-competitive institutions and privileges. Yet our university disciplines are organised not—contrary to popular myth—as competitive arenas for the "free market of ideas", but as feudal guilds and "professions", and as cartels.

The *institutionalisation* of Popper's thought (or lack of it) is an appropriate example. Stove complains of the wide currency and influence of Popper's thought, of how it has been publicly embraced by eminent scientists as well as by many members of the educated public. This is true, just because it provides a productive link between science, methodology, and the theory of learning. Yet there are only three graduate departments of philosophy in all of North America and the former British Empire (one in England, one in Canada, and one in New Zealand) where chairs of philosophy are held by "Popperians." They have been systematically excluded by the unholy alliance of three intellectual cartels: phenomenology; "analytical philosophy"; and the pseudo-methodology of induction. The last two are Stove's own guilds.

W. W. Bartley, III
*The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace*
*Stanford University*

I said that "almost any drongo can do normal science", and Professor Bartley denies this. But the evidence he brings against me is strangely indirect: that the new American cars fall apart whereas the old ones did not, and that American micro-chips are about to succumb to their Japanese competitors. Now it is unlikely, to say the least, that these things are due to differences in intellectual capacity between two generations of American car-makers, or between American electronic-engineers and Japanese ones. But even if they were, that would hardly begin to show that only a few people can do normal science.

The point is peripheral in any case. It would not alter my estimate of Popper's ideas if I were wrong on this matter and Professor Bartley right, because it is not a thesis of Popper's philosophy that few people can do normal science. Apparently it *is* a thesis of some variant of Popperism which Professor Bartley has embraced. But of course I was not writing about that.

The rest of Professor Bartley's letter is more peripheral still. If Russell was or was not present on some occasion when Wittgenstein waved, or did not wave, a poker at Popper—what has all this got to do with anything I said? Likewise if "the Senate of one of the California state universities has just repudiated 'Merit awards'." Likewise for Professor Bartley's crotchets about epistemology being "a sort of branch of economics." I cannot believe that the Editors wish me to pursue matters having so little relation as these to what I wrote.

D. C. Stove
*University of Sydney*

## Moslems, Christians & Jews

In his review of Daniel Pipes's book *In The Path of God* ("Blind Spots & Believers", Encounter, April) David Spanier states:

> "American policy in the Middle East, whatever the importance assigned to Islamic ideology, has tilted for the most part heavily in favour of the state of Israel, whose leadership, in the past year or two anyway, has been symbolised by an Old Testament pursuit of vengeance in its Lebanon campaign."

While people of good will can debate the merits of the Israeli action in Lebanon, it is quite evident that in the above statement Mr Spanier has resorted to a slanderous misrepresentation and distortion of the spiritual state of Judaism.

In the first place, the Old Testament did not then and does not now teach vengeance. Jews, including Israelis, are no more vengeful than, say, the English and no doubt less so than other peoples. Mr Spanier has (in the words of the historian of anti-Semitism, James Parkes) committed "a vulgar and unbridled abuse of Judaism and the Jewish people."

Secondly, the campaign in Lebanon was motivated by what the Israelis perceived as a threat to the security of their northern border, not by vengeance. On the other hand, it does seem that vengeance is a factor in motivating the Shi'ite attacks against the withdrawing Israeli defence forces.

Mr Spanier then proceeds naively to inform us that "Islam, unlike Christianity, contains a complete programme for ordering society." Certainly this is not for lack of effort on Christianity's part! Mr Spanier is guilty of faulty religio-historical analysis and selective amnesia. He seems to have forgotten two of Christianity's "complete programmes for ordering society" which affected Muslims and Jews alike—the Crusades and the Inquisition.

Finally, by no stretch of the imagination can Daniel Pipes be read as an advocate of the Arab perspective in the Mid-East dispute with Israel (see, for example: *International Security*, Fall, 1984; *Commentary*, June 1984; and *Commentary*, April 1983). To answer Mr Spanier's question, "Did Washington take his [Pipes's] advice?" Indeed yes: Washington is surely more firmly pro-Israel today than ever before.

Mark Jacobs
*Chicago*

## Waiting for the Cracks

I have read Melvin J. Lasky's article "In the Margin" (June) with great interest. Most of us who share the same outlook on these matters can only be in agreement with what he says in the last paragraph of the article on ideology and the Soviet system:

> "Flaws in logic and ethics are as nothing when compared to cracks in an empire, when masses are disaffected, nations alienated, communal religions outraged. I am afraid it is no longer a problem of self-critical intellectualising. Not mere 'superstructures', but foundations themselves are in tremor."

If we lived only 50 years ago, we could wait for the cracks to open without risking to be physically endangered ourselves. Today, the situation is such that in that extreme case the Soviets may create a World War simply to maintain internal cohesion, no matter whether such a conflict would result in *Mad* or not.

How can we do everything so as not to prevent or slow down internal disintegration of the Soviet system while at the same time avoiding a mutually destructive conflict?

Friedrich W. Zoells
*La Tour-de-Peilz*
*Switzerland*

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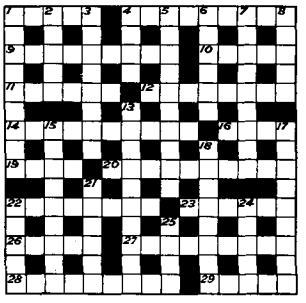
# Life & Letters Today

*London*



SAGE: *Shrugging aside the challenge of nitwits, cacti and pelmanism, Mr Terry Girdlestone, aged 55, from Bridgwater, Somerset, yesterday won the Collins Dictionaries/* **Times** *Crossword championship.*

*His average time for the four puzzles in which those solutions appeared, was 11¼ minutes, or about 25 seconds for each clue.*

*He confessed to having been in serious trouble in the fourth puzzle, when faced with the clue* **"Burmese Solomon?"**

*He said: "I realized I was in with a chance and the panic set in. I had to leave the clue and go back to it at the end, and it took me two minutes before I saw that the answer was 'Usage'."*

*THE TIMES*

*London*

ORTHODOX ORTHOGRAPHY? **If the Londonderry City Council is to be allowed to call itself "*Derry*" and thereby annoy many Ulster Protestants it might as well go the whole hog and spell it "*Doire*" instead of perpetuating what for an Irish Nationalist is surely an offensive Anglicised spelling.**

**But what are we to make of nationalists who are capable of changing the spelling of words in what is still officially the first language of the Irish Republic just to make them conveniently pronounceable by foreigners?**

**The term "*Aer Lingus*" is an example. It is an orthographical monstrosity. The correct Irish spelling, as everybody knows, is "*Aer Loingeas*" which follows the inflexible rule of Irish spelling by which a "narrow" vowel— "*i*" or "*e*"—at the end of one syllable must be followed by a narrow vowel at the beginning of the next syllable; likewise, a broad vowel—"*a*", "*o*" or "*u*"—must be followed by a broad vowel.**

**It is [Peter Simple writes] as if the French, to make the pronunciation of their capital easier for English-speaking people, spelled it "*Paree*."**

*DAILY TELEGRAPH*

*London*

BLACK & WHITE: *A Barrister threatened to withdraw from an Old Bailey trial today, because of the use of the word* **"blackmail".**

*Mr Beriston Bryan clashed angrily with Judge Alan Lipfriend after saying:*

**"As a black person myself, I object most strongly to this word. It connotes a derogatory stigma to our people and is an evil word in our eyes."**

*He added:*

**"I shall ask to withdraw from the case if I am forced to repeat the word. I don't mind using the term 'menaces,' but 'blackmail' causes a tremendous amount of offence to black people. If we used the word 'whitemail,' I'm sure a lot of people would be up in arms."**

*Judge Lipfriend said the "quite natural" word blackmail was on the statue and could not be changed. "I do not want a speech from you on this matter. Neither do I want this court to be used as a vehicle for propagating certain views," the judge warned.*

*Mr Bryan defends two of five West Indian men accused of blackmailing, assaulting and kidnapping a building firm chief in Ealing.*

THE EARLIEST *recorded use of the word blackmail, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, referred to a sort of protection racket run by Highland chiefs.*

*In the 17th century, blackmail also had a legal meaning which it seems since to have lost. It referred to rent reckoned in labour or produce as distinguished from "white rents" paid in "white money," (i.e., silver).*

*LONDON STANDARD*

*Moscow*

SALES TALK: *In Stalin's day the "Great Soviet Encyclopaedia" said on advertising:*

**"Hullabaloo, speculation, and a mad race for profits has made advertising a means of swindling the people and foisting upon them goods frequently useless or of dubious quality."**

*The latest edition of the "Encylopaedia" plays a different tune:*

**"The popularisation of goods with the aim of selling them, the creation of demand for goods, the acquaintance of consumers with their quality, particular features and locations of their sales and explanation of the method of their use."**

*And which capitalist could quarrel with that?*

*FINANCIAL TIMES*

*London*

LEFT-OVERS: **A bemused reader in the current "New Socialist" writes for guidance after an article referring to 11 varieties of "Leftism": the Left, the Labour Left, the New Left (also apparently known as the New Municipal Left); the New Labour Left; the Bennite Left; the Ultra Left; the Hard Left; the NEC Left; the Soft Left; and, finally the Organised Left. Right?**

*THE TIMES*

*London*

ESOTERIC DECEPTION: *Many computer advertisements are totally misleading. The equipment often cannot perform functions they claim, says the Advertising Standards Authority. And the rapid growth of interest in home computers has brought in its wake some adverts of "down-right deception."*

*Some are misleading in the inaccurate detail they put in; others in the essential information they leave out, about "hardware" and "software." And the jargon-ridden descriptions of computers can have advertisers in difficulties.*

*The authority says: "Technology seems to advance week by week and the products themselves are so complex that everyday language cannot explain them, so an esoteric language has been developed—which neither the average consumer nor average advertiser can understand. . . ."*

*DAILY MAIL*

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# AUTHORS

**M. M. Carlin**, born in South Africa, and educated at Rhodes University and Cambridge, is a Lecturer in English at the University of Cape Town. He has worked for many years in both West and East Africa, including two years in Uganda under General Amin.

**Herbert Lomas**'s collection of poems, *At Southwark Cathedral*, is to be published by Oxford University Press in the spring of 1986.

**James Rusbridger** (born 1928, educated at St Michael's College, Tenbury, and Dover College) in 1952 joined the Naval Design Office at Vickers Armstrong, where he worked on the design and testing of a variety of post-War naval weapons systems. In the mid-1960s he moved to a major international trading company with headquarters in the City of London. He frequently visited the Soviet Union and East Europe.

Since his retirement to Cornwall, he has undertaken private research and written about various aspects of World War II, together with more recent intelligence operations involving *Sigint* and cryptography, and has made a special study of those operations carried out by the Germans and Japanese against the Allies. He has contributed to several BBC television documentaries about the work of the Intelligence Services, and is currently writing a book, to be published by Arms & Armour Press, on the wartime work of German Intelligence. A television documentary based on his earlier ENCOUNTER article, "The Sinking of the 'Automedon', the Capture of the 'Nankin'" (May 1985), will be shown on *Timewatch* (BBC Television) in January.

**Adrian Blackledge**'s poem was awarded a prize in the Poetry Society's 1984 National Poetry Competition.

**George Watson**, Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, is editor of the Unservile State Group and the author of *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain*, *Story of the Novel* and *The Idea of Liberalism* (Macmillan, 1977, 1979, 1985). His *Nationalisation: The End of an Illusion?* was brought out by Poland Street Publications in 1983; he edited *The Shorter New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* (1981). His contributions to ENCOUNTER include "Was Hitler a Marxist?" (December 1984), "Who are the Conservatives?" (December 1983), "Was Marx an Ancient Historian?" (November 1981), and "Political Language & Its Disrepair" (June 1980).

**Michael Foley**'s volumes of poems include *The Go Situation* and *True Life Love Stories* (Blackstaff Press, 1982, 1976).

**Jean Hanff Korelitz** was born in New York and was until recently an affiliated student reading English at Clare College, Cambridge. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Durham*, *Other Poetry*, and *Poetry Now*. Her first collection, *The Properties of Breath*, will be published by Taxus Press in summer 1986.

**Jean-François Revel** writes a column for the Paris journal *Le Point*. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish*, was published in 1985 by Doubleday (New York) and Weidenfeld (London).

**Edward Pearce** is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph* in London. *Hummingbirds and Hyenas*, a second volume of his satirical vignettes of Parliamentary personalities, was published in 1985 by Faber and Faber.

**Roy Kerridge** is the author of a novel, *Druid Madonna* (Brynmill, 1983); his non-fiction work about West Indians in England, *Real Wicked, Guy*, was followed this autumn by *Bizarre Britain: A Calendar of Eccentricity* (Blackwell, 1983, 1985). A volume of autobiography, *Lone Conformist*, was published in 1984 by Chatto & Windus. His previous contribution to ENCOUNTER was "The Front Line Dog" (April 1984).

**Christopher Ricks** is King Edward VII Professor of English Literature, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Christ's College. His published work includes *The Force of Poetry* (1984), *Keats and Embarrassment* (1974, n.e. 1984), and *Milton's Grand Style* (1963, n.e. 1978), all published by Oxford University Press. He is co-editor of *The State of the Language* (University of California Press, 1980).

**Roger Lewis** has recently been elected a Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford. He is fiction critic of the *New Statesman* and a regular columnist on *Punch*; he is working on studies of Ezra Pound, Anthony Burgess, and J. M. Barrie.

**Charles Mosley** is London Editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and editor of *Debrett's Handbook* (1981).

**D. J. Taylor**, a recent graduate of St John's College, Oxford, works in London as a copywriter. His literary work has appeared in *The Spectator*, *London Magazine*, *P.E.N. New Fiction*, etc., and his novel *Great Eastern Land* will be published early in 1986 by Secker & Warburg.

**John Mole**'s latest volume of poems, *In and Out of the Apple*, was published in 1984 by Secker & Warburg, who in autumn 1986 will bring out his next collection, *Homing*.

**Teresa Cherfas** was until recently Assistant Editor of *Survey* magazine; she is now Senior Programme Assistant for the BBC Russian Service. Her article is an expanded version of a broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

**Paul Hollander** (who was born in Budapest and lived in Hungary under both the Nazi and the Communist régimes) is Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, a Fellow of the Russian Research Center at Harvard, and author of *Soviet and American Society: A Comparison* (1973). His book on *Political Pilgrims* was published in 1981 by Oxford University Press (New York and London). His most recent book is *The Many Faces of Socialism* (Transaction Books, 1983). He is now working on a study of anti-Americanism inside and outside the United States.

**Sidney Hook** is Emeritus Professor, New York University, and Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford, California. His numerous books form a wide span—from one of his earliest works, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (1933), to *Philosophy and Public Policy* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1980) and *Marxism and Beyond* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1984). His most recent article in ENCOUNTER is his memoir of Bertrand Russell (March 1984). This will form part of *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century*, his political and intellectual autobiography, which is to appear in 1986.

**Erratum.** We regret the typographical errors on the opening page (p. 28) of Melvin J. Lasky's article "The Doctrine of Moral Equivalence" (ENCOUNTER, December). Not only was the author's name wrongly spelled, but he appears to be disagreeing with Confucius when the point at issue was actually with President Reagan. The italicised quotation from Confucius (cited from Ezra Pound's *Guide to Kulchur*) should not have been in the text, but should have been printed as the opening motto. Hi-tech printing is a fallible thing. As Ronald Reagan might have said, adapting Confucius, "If it's broke, fix it. . . ."

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